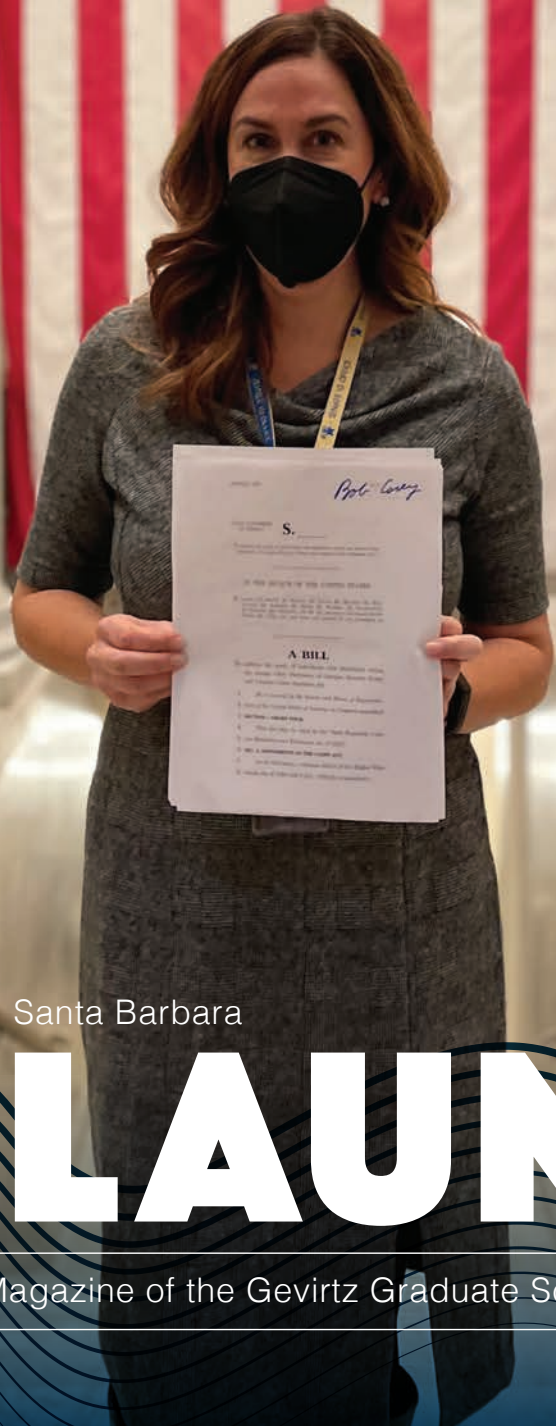


DR. FELIX GOES TO WASHINGTON



University of California, Santa Barbara

2022-2023

RE:LAUNCH

The Research Magazine of the Gevirtz Graduate School of Education

RE:LAUNCH

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On the *RE:Launch* cover: Dr. Erika Felix spent the 2021-22 year on Capitol Hill in Senator Bob Casey's office. Learn more on pp. 2-3.
below: The ribbon-cutting ceremony for more murals overseen by students and faculty from the Department of Education at Isla Vista's St. George Youth Center.



Be sure to keep up with all the School's news with our quarterly e-letter, From Ocean & El Colegio.

And if you're an alumnus, be sure to send us all your news: george@education.ucsb.edu

MAJOR GRANT AWARDS FUNDED IN FISCAL YEAR, 2021-22

PI/Co-PI(s)	Projects & Sponsors	Total Amounts
Tine Sloan (PI)	SCALE Fostering Deeper Learning Project (Phase 2 Expansion) William and Flora Hewlett Foundation	\$1,000,000
Jeff Milem (PI), Tim Dewar (Co-PI)	CSMP – ESSER: Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief UC California Subject Matter Project	\$665,775
Shane Jimerson (PI), Mian Wang and Erin Dowdy (Co-PIs)	Project TEAMS: Collaboration to Train Special Education and School Psychology Scholars to Advance Equity in the Study of Mental Health among Students U.S. Department of Education	\$487,968
Sarah Roberts (PI)	CAREER: Understanding the Routinization of Mathematics Language Routines National Science Foundation	\$384,752
Jill Sharkey (PI)	Great Outcomes for Family and Adolescent and Recovery (GO FAR) The Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (Santa Barbara)	\$359,646
Danielle Harlow (PI)	Collaborative Research: EPIQC: Enabling Practical-Scale Quantum Computation National Science Foundation	\$356,812
Danielle Harlow (PI)	Practice-driven Research: Developing Constructivism-informed Tools for Supporting Learning in Informal Contexts National Science Foundation	\$244,080
Maryam Kia-Keating (PI), Miya Barnett (Co-PI)	Santa Barbara Resiliency Project Santa Barbara Neighborhood Clinics	\$140,000
Jill Sharkey (PI)	Evaluating Proposition 64 Public Health and Safety Grant Program County of Santa Barbara	\$105,000
Shane Jimerson (PI)	Understanding and Promoting Policy and Programming for Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disturbances Santa Barbara County Special Education Local Plan Area Office	\$73,987

For more information about external funding at the Gevirtz School, see the Contracts & Grants pages: <https://education.ucsb.edu/contracts-grants>

DR. FELIX GOES TO WASHINGTON

Forget about the image of academics existing in a distant Ivory Tower. Associate Professor Erika Felix of the Department of Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology has spent the past year in the U.S. Capitol Building. She's been the 2021 Jacquelin Goldman Congressional Fellow, a position administered by the American Psychological Association and funded by the American Psychological Foundation.



“As a psychologist, I have always been interested in how we make change at the local, state, and federal levels,” Felix says. And at almost the end of her year in D.C. she admits, “There’s no way to learn this stuff without being here. Both professionally and personally it’s been a period of growth.”

Felix has had her eye on this fellowship for some time—she first applied for it as a post doc after she earned her doctorate from DePaul University. Hoping that a government with one party in charge of the White House and Congress might be a more amenable year for change, she re-applied.

Once accepted and in D.C., there were three weeks of training for her and the rest of her fellowship cohort—it turns out many professional societies provide fellows to help guide our country’s decision-making. While most go to the executive branch, Felix is one of 30 or so on the legislative side this year.

After training, she got to interview with offices to find a placement. “I did research on senators and their committees before going,” she explains, “and I had had my eye on Senator Casey [of Pennsylvania] from the beginning. He had a wonderful reputation in the Senate for being a person of good character that works hard to help children and families.”

Given Felix’s research has mostly been in the field of trauma and disaster mental health and resilience, she headed across the country thinking that’s the expertise she would offer. But Senator Casey’s office presented her with a chance to grow, as he is the chair of the Senate Special Committee on Aging, which focused on people with disabilities across the life span. “I decided to really stretch myself,” she reflects, “I had done IEP and 504 plans before for students who needed accommodations at school, but this work is about all disability across the lifespan. It fits well with what we do at the Gevirtz School.”

That means she’s been able to help work on legislation such as a measure to promote health equity for people with disabilities and helping diversify local government leadership by removing barriers to serving for people with disabilities. The last suite of bills, she says, “Helps remove barriers to running for elected office, such as losing federal disability benefits, whereas another helps local communities that might not have the finances to provide the reasonable accommodations required by the Americans with Disabilities Act.” Such a law is important, she points out, “For when we can diversify our leadership and have more voices at the table, we can have a more inclusive, caring country.”



Felix’s government work has been very diversified, from providing comments on bills from her psychologist viewpoint to making sure said bills get written in the most inclusive way. She has also engaged in oversight work, which is what Congress does to make sure the Executive Branch agencies are fulfilling their obligations to the public. She’s also relished the opportunity to visit Pennsylvania with the senator and his staff, to observe special education training and integration efforts and learn how things get accomplished in a state other than California.

She was even one of the lead planners for a hearing on Inclusive Disaster Management: Improving Preparedness, Response and Recovery. “To get four witnesses for the hearing, we talked to twenty people,” she recalls. “Learning from a range of people across the country—it was an amazing experience.”

When she returns to Santa Barbara for the 2022-23 academic year, she realizes there are two large areas of growth from which she will draw knowledge. First, she says, “I can now be better at supporting policy locally, as I now understand the complex dynamics behind the decision-making better. I also understand what research is needed to help support policy decisions and how to communicate our research findings better to those decision-makers. We need

to know how to present it so it could be told to your grandmother in plain English and not jargon.”

But even the areas she should explore might change, both in her original research interest emergency management, which she now knows needs to be more inclusive, to concern for all disabilities. “One in four Americans have a disability, even if it’s invisible, and we need to do a better job in including them at the table when planning for and responding to disasters,” she points out. “This time in D.C. has even helped take the blinders off my eyes.”

“As a researcher, I now understand the kind of products that can lead to change,” she asserts, insisting on the need for more program evaluation research. “We can get too theoretical with our questions, and it’s important sometimes just to answer, ‘Did it work?’ so that Congress knows what to fund. We also need to communicate those findings succinctly to decision-makers.” ■

WEST SIDE SURVEY



The team, with Professor Tarek Azzam, students, and representatives from Santa Barbara Public Health and Las Promotores, at La Cumbre Junior High School before heading out to conduct surveys.



Three students consult notes on the survey trail.

The Gevirtz School believes healthy neighborhoods lead to healthy, higher performing schools. So, for the first time, the School will be joining with Cottage Health, Santa Barbara County Public Health Department, Santa Barbara Promotores Network and other community partners for the Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA). The CHNA, typically conducted every three years, measures the well-being of Santa Barbara County residents. The data are posted on CottageData2Go.org, where they can be accessed by health providers, non-profit organizations, and the public. As in past years, the 2022 CHNA centers around a countywide telephone and web survey. For the first time this year, the assessment will include door-to-door outreach conducted by UCSB students and researchers with the support of the Promotores Network.

Cottage Center for Population Health leads the CHNA planning effort, supported by an advisory group (see sidebar) that includes city and countywide agencies. Katy Bazylewicz, Cottage Health vice president for population health and marketing, says, “Partnering with the UCSB Center for Evaluation and Assessment and the Westside Resource Center teams brings both expertise in collecting reliable and generalizable data and a mission-driven purpose for using these data to help inform the approach of the new resource center.”

As part of the creation of the Westside Community Resource Center at Harding University Partnership School (profiled in the 2021 issue of *Launch*), members of the Gevirtz School have used Cottage Data2Go to understand the needs of the Westside community relative to other neighborhoods in Santa Barbara County, so it's crucial the data is comprehensive. “We know that housing stability is a big issue for students on the Westside,” says Chrissy Yost, coordinator for the emerging Westside Community Resource Center. The CHNA is one way that organizations determine how they will allocate their resources. “Our aim is to ensure that all households are able to participate in the survey.” That’s why the Center for Evaluation & Assessment (CEA) and the Center for Publicly Engaged Scholarship (CPES)—both based at the Gevirtz School—have partnered to design the door-to-door sub-population assessment.

“The purpose of the data is to identify areas of high need around issues of health, health access, and well-being,” says Tarek Azzam, professor and director of the CEA. Azzam developed the methodology for the survey on the Westside. “By visiting households in person, we will improve the response rate and will help ensure that we are representing the community as accurately as possible. Door-to-door results tend to be more representative.” Last fall, Azzam, Yost, and graduate researcher Isaac Castro began conversations

2022 Community Health Advisory Group:

Community Health Care Centers of the Central Coast • Cottage Health • Dignity Health • Lompoc Valley Community Healthcare Organization • Lompoc Valley Medical Center • Mixteco/Indigena Community Organizing Project (MICOP) • Planned Parenthood California Central Coast • Santa Barbara County Department of Behavioral Wellness • Santa Barbara County Public Health Department • Santa Barbara Foundation • Santa Barbara Neighborhood Clinics • Tribal Health • University of California, Santa Barbara



with Cottage Health to discuss ways to gather data about the Westside through an approach that allows for deeper analysis of the needs of the community.

Going door-to-door has the advantage of a high response rate but is also labor intensive. For assistance, Azzam reached out to Rebeca Mireles-Rios, associate professor and director of CPES.

Mireles-Rios was immediately on board. “The goal of the Center for Publicly Engaged Scholarship is to bring research and practice into the community, in terms of both education and public health,” she says. “Health access is an essential component of strong communities, especially communities that are historically marginalized.” Mireles-Rios had a full class of students participating in her Community-Based Outreach class (ED 146) in spring quarter. Eight to ten of those students will be part of the teams conducting the door-to-door surveys. “Students who weren’t planning on researching over the summer are sticking around to participate in this project,” she explains. “We see this as another way to bring together academics, research, and the community, which is a central part of what we want to do.”

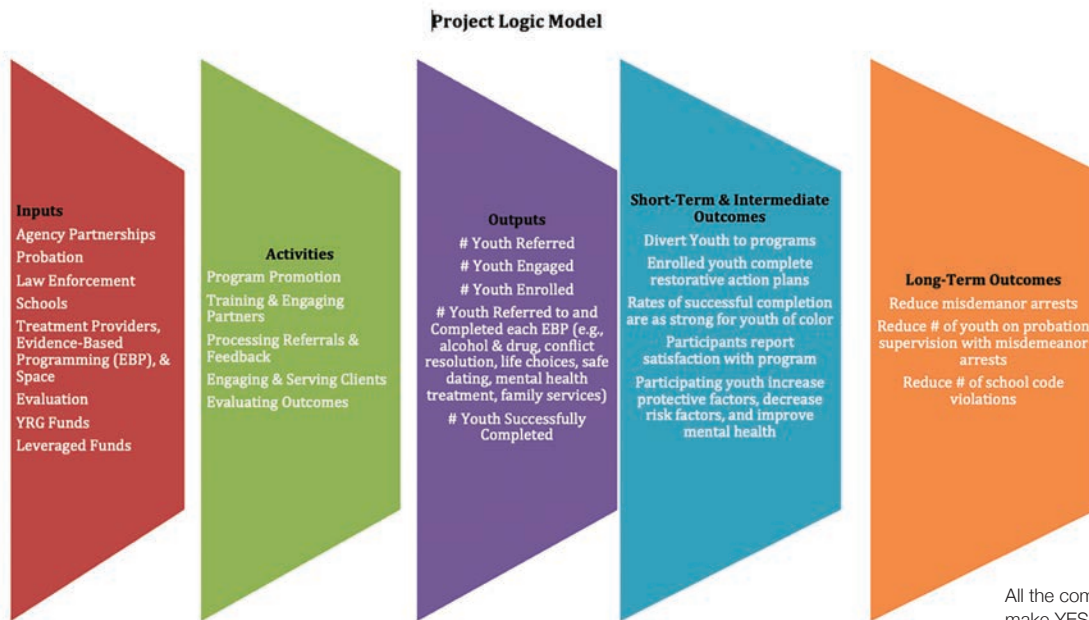
Azzam and the CEA team—associate director Natalie Jones and graduate student Caitlin Ng—will coordinate the survey teams. Each team will include

at least two people, with at least one (if not both) being fluent in Spanish. Trained Community Health Ambassadors, who are members of the Promotores, a group focused on health education for Santa Barbara County’s Spanish-speakers and recent immigrants, will accompany the student teams. Mireles-Rios looks forward to lessons students will learn from the Promotores, who are highly visible and respected in the community.

Azzam describes this collaboration as one that has everything he wants for the CEA. He says, “This project has the potential to be very useful, not just theoretical. It’s a great opportunity to learn more about the community and to train undergraduates in data collection and to study survey design for graduate students, all as part of a collaboration with influential partners that will be hopefully impactful in a positive way for the community being served.”

The CHNA will also include data gathered via phone and online, as in past years, and will also include listening tours with community members and organizations. All this information, in combination with an analysis of countywide health outcomes and social determinants of health, will be compiled and analyzed by Cottage Center for Population Health. Results are expected to be available in early 2023. ■

DESIGNING AND EVALUATING SYSTEMS THAT KEEP KIDS AT-PROMISE



Professor Jill Sharkey of Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology (CCSP) and her research team are working in partnership with Santa Barbara County Probation (SBCPD) and the Council of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (CADA) to prevent youth from entering the juvenile justice system. The California Board of State and Community Corrections awarded SBCPD a \$795,193 grant for the work. Sharkey’s team serves as the external evaluator for the Youth Empowerment Services Program (YES), which provides pre-adjudication diversion to youth ages 10 to 17 across Santa Barbara County. As CCSP doctoral student and project manager Angela Pollard puts it,

“Kids are best served when there’s collaboration across all the agencies who serve them.”

That’s precisely the purpose of YES. In order to reduce the number of misdemeanor arrests and reoffending rates in Santa Barbara County’s juvenile justice system, and to support the strengths and needs of youth in a trauma-informed and culturally-sensitive manner, schools and law enforcement

agencies refer youth to YES—run by CADA—instead of the SBCPD for eligible education code violations or legal infractions.

The project, which like most of the world unfortunately ran into complications as COVID-19 hit, has now amassed preliminary data. Sharkey says, “This is a unique project in that almost every indicator has improved even after one year.” Significant improvements were found for parent-reported family satisfaction, while significant reductions were found for youth-reported anxiety and depression symptoms, perception of marijuana use, current alcohol and marijuana use, and criminal thinking after participation in YES.

The process begins with a screener that doubles as an evaluation tool. Most importantly, Sharkey points out, “The screener identifies mental health needs within a whole family system,” as both the children and their parents take part. The intake leads to an individualized Restorative Action Plan (RAP) to address each child’s needs. RAPs can suggest evidence-based interventions such as Reasoning and Rehabilitation, Multi-Dimensional Family Therapy, and Aggression Replacement Training. “It really is

a tailored services approach,” Pollard says. “In some ways it’s very simple, but it takes a while for systems to change.”

The need for such a change is clear. The Annie E. Casey Foundation, a leader in juvenile diversion efforts, “calculates that at least 60% of juvenile cases—and likely a larger percentage—could be safely diverted if formal probation was limited to only youth with serious offenses or those otherwise assessed to be a risk to public safety.” From the preliminary results, there has only been one case of recidivism for the youth that have completed YES. And although these results cannot be attributed only to YES, misdemeanor referrals sent to probation went from 1,273, 1,134, and 923 in baseline years 1-3 (July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2020) to 275 in the first intervention year (July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021).

One Case Manager for YES offered this testimonial: “A client came into the program with high aggression and substance usage issues. She was a long-term, high-risk client. She has since then attended [redacted school name], has worked with treatment for a while as well as with our mental health counselor. She was truly grateful for all the help she received from all of the YES program. Client also stated she would have no idea where she’d be if it weren’t for our efforts to encourage her to continue with the program. She has successfully completed all aspects of the program and another life has been truly changed.”

Beyond achieving ground level results that keep youth out of the school to prison pipeline, the Sharkey team—which, in addition to Pollard includes CCSP doctoral student Daniel del Cid, and undergraduate researchers Isaac Bouchard and Paola Portabales—is exploring further avenues for research, with four papers in the works. The first will be an overview exploring how other localities can establish a similar program, laying out guidelines toward building community partnerships and service linkage. A second will explore how the sources of



The YES research team (front row, l-r): Paola Portabales Mosquera de Barros (undergraduate), Daniel del Cid (4th year graduate student researcher), and Fatima Gonzalez (undergrad); (back row, l-r): Isaac Bouchard (undergrad), Dr. Jill Sharkey, Jean Pauline Serrano (incoming 1st year GSR), Alice Mullin (3rd year GSR), Natalie Larez (4th year GSR), Karina Aragón (3rd year GSR), Angela Pollard (2nd year GSR).

information gathered in intakes align—do the data from parents and their children match up? How can using both sources inform treatments?

A third will explore the program’s students and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). How many have had ACEs, and how do treatment and outcomes vary with ACEs? Then the fourth paper will look at how parental reports of family functioning connect with treatment results, and then how that connects with any group treatment the children participate in.

“Over the past two decades I have worked in collaboration with SBPCPD and a variety of youth-serving agencies and nonprofit organizations to better understand how to support vulnerable children and youth in our community and beyond,” Sharkey sums up. “Systems change is difficult, and I am extraordinarily fortunate to have visionary partners who prioritize youth development alongside data-based decision-making and have transformed our County to an exemplar of best practice for reducing the number of youth on supervised probation and who are incarcerated while building comprehensive programs for youths and their families in their communities. Next steps include increasing the work force of professionals who are highly qualified to provide services to youth who have experienced complex trauma.” ■