The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Center for Health Policy
at the University of New Mexico

Strategic Plan 2008–2011

Educating Health Policy Leaders to Improve Health and Health Care in America:
Seeing the Forest and the Trees

December 2008
MISSION

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Center for Health Policy (RWJF Center) is dedicated to increasing the diversity of health policy leaders in America who are trained in the social and behavioral sciences and nursing. In particular, the RWJF Center seeks to increase the number of social and health scientists from Latino and American Indian and other racial/ethnic communities underrepresented in these fields who are prepared to improve health and health care by shaping our nation’s health policy.

The RWJF Center for Health Policy will accomplish this mission of educating a new generation of health policy leaders through on-the-job research and policy analysis training, leadership development and community capacity-building.

The RWJF Center will primarily focus its investments in the five disciplinary areas that the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has historically cultivated to improve health services research and policy analysis for the purpose of improving U.S. health policy:

- Economics
- Political Science
- Public Health
- Sociology
- Nursing

Our nation’s health policy can only be improved through insightful identification of issues, innovative and interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary analysis of alternative solutions, and careful consideration and evaluation of policy implementation. Scholars can assist decision-makers make better health policy by offering a better understanding of the issues and by developing a knowledge base for potential options, by offering high quality analysis, and by contributing to the discourse nationwide. Additionally, scholars from underrepresented communities provide unique, lived, and experiential observations that enrich analytic frameworks, redefine issues and offer different perspectives reflecting the experiences and knowledge gained growing up and living in their particular communities. Thus, we will focus on:
- Conducting research and policy analyses that address the myriad of social, political and economic factors, as well as financing and delivery system factors that contribute to the inequities we observe in health and health care in our society

- Supporting leadership development activities that will contribute to the “new social sciences” that strive to apply theoretical knowledge to solve social problems

- Investing in our communities so that they can share their experiential knowledge and teach us how best to improve the health and well-being of individuals and families living, working and playing in their particular environments.

The RWJF Center for Health Policy is the only health policy center dedicated to increasing the number of leaders from Latino and American Indian communities who will help shape the future of our nation’s health care and health policy. A collaboration between the University of New Mexico and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the RWJF Center for Health Policy focuses on inserting the perspectives of Latino, American Indian and other underrepresented groups into the most pressing health policy debates. Visit http://healthpolicy.unm.edu for further information.

**CORE VALUES**

**Social Justice**

Our society is burdened by vast disparities in wealth, health and opportunities. Traditionally, many institutions have focused on addressing the symptoms of social and health problems rather than addressing these challenges at their root, that is, by focusing on the underlying inequities that contribute to their existence. Decades of existing public policies have also contributed to the current problems. By focusing on the root causes of health disparities, a new interdisciplinary science that brings the strength of social science scholarship together with the clinical sciences can improve community health and assure opportunities for all communities.

**Excellence through Diversity**

Additional perspectives or “fresh eyes” on a problem often lead to great scientific breakthroughs. It is this “revolutionary” activity that creates excellence and new knowledge in the sciences, both physical and social. Creating opportunities in which Latino and indigenous peoples, plus other racial/ethnic minority communities, can
contribute to the national dialogue on health and health care issues as scholars, community leaders and even politicians, will improve the health of all communities.

**Commitment**

We are devoted to the personal and professional success of our graduate fellows and senior fellows, and to improving the health of our communities whether they are located in New Mexico, across the United States or across the Americas. We will provide the support and mentoring required to achieve excellence in our scholarship, as well as excellence in technical assistance to communities and agencies in their efforts to improve the health and well-being of all Americans.

**Respect**

We will respect the beliefs and traditions of all peoples. Freedom of speech and inquiry follows from respectful relationships and recognition of the value of diversity in opinion and in thought. Through respect we can build collaborations and partnerships built on trust for mutual gain. We keep our promises and maintain transparent transactions.

**VISION**

**What The RWJF Center For Health Policy Will Be Known For**

Cultivating exceptional health policy leaders who accept the challenges of improving health and health care in America. We will train Latino, American Indian and other ethnic minority group members as health policy leaders whose expertise in health services research and policy analysis demonstrates that diversity of perspectives leads to better health outcomes for all the people of the United States and the Americas.

Improving health policy at the local, state, regional, national, and international levels requires policy analysis that is first and foremost high quality research. The complex problems our nation and the world faces require that innovative approaches be developed to address them. These approaches can be found in interdisciplinary collaborations and transdisciplinary work that stretches the boundaries of traditional disciplines, creates new methodologies, and produces new insights and a knowledge base for action.
Focusing on applied research that addresses key underlying factors contributing to the health and well-being of Americans, in order to inform policy development and implementation. The complexity of health and health care issues and the need for interdisciplinary teams to address them requires that every member of the team bring to the table their own disciplinary expertise to share. Thus, team members must have excellent training in their disciplines. Unfortunately, most disciplinary programs do not expose young scholars to applied research until late in their educational experiences. Yet on-the-job training from the beginning of a doctoral student’s theoretical and methodological training, coupled with ongoing mentoring from senior researchers and policy analysts, adds motivation, research skills and experience that cannot be gained anywhere but out in the field.

Creating a shared learning environment for community leaders, senior fellows, fellows and staff. We all have something to learn and to teach in an interdisciplinary environment. The RWJF Center will be a learning environment for everyone from the most senior scholars to our doctoral fellows to the most junior members of our professional staff. As well, we expect that we will both learn from and instruct community members who, as partners in our research and policy analysis efforts, can strengthen their communities and increase its resilience.

Leading innovative interventions that improve the health care received by individuals and leading the promotion of community health through preventive interventions. Our research will have practical applications for the health of both individuals and communities. Our research will inform policy-making at the local, “private” institutional level and will inform governmental decision-making at the local, state, regional, national, and international levels. We will engage in applied social science research and policy analysis as well as in demonstration research to address specific issues. For example, the RWJF Center for Health Policy will lead a statewide initiative to improve the quality of medical care available to New Mexicans by working with stakeholders such as health care providers, government representatives, patient advocates, business executives and community leaders throughout the state and the nation.

Being the consummate partner in research, policy analysis and community capacity building. Partnerships are instrumental to successful interdisciplinary research and community-based research efforts that lead to health policy changes. As a university-
wide health policy research center, the RWJF Center serves as a workshop for faculty throughout the University, serving the informational and analytic needs of civic leaders and the policy-making community. These partnerships are critical for RWJF Center Senior Fellows and Graduate Fellows to gain the experience and trust necessary to participate in the policy-making process. This process relies on personal relationships and exchanges of information which are best conducted through trusting partnerships.

GOALS 2008–2011

1. Create opportunities for student learning from exceptional leaders to enhance development of professional competencies in health policy.
2. Enhance leadership development and career success among health policy professionals through opportunities for lifelong learning.
3. Lead initiatives to promote and support research that addresses critical health policy issues and improves health care management and policy decision-making.
4. Facilitate communication among health care practitioners, policy makers, doctoral students and faculty.

STRATEGIES

Policy Research

The RWJF Center for Health Policy will be an integral part of the University of New Mexico, the state’s premier public center for graduate and professional education, and the state’s largest and most comprehensive public university. The professional schools at the University of New Mexico share an unusually research-intensive orientation with their counterpart faculties in the health sciences and in the arts and sciences. Together they have established an outstanding record of research, scholarship and creative activity. Interactions among the University’s faculties in interdisciplinary research give education at the University of New Mexico a particular richness and depth. The University’s public mission to serve its community, the state and the nation ties a significant portion of its research and education efforts to the needs of society.
The RWJF Center for Health Policy will serve as a university-wide, organized research center serving all the faculties of the University in pursuit of knowledge and its application to health policy. The research projects conducted by senior fellows (e.g., affiliated UNM faculty) and professional research staff of the RWJF Center will serve as the training ground for our graduate fellows. The RWJF Center will ensure continued exposure to the kind of on-the-job training available at the best social science departments in the country. Through an on-the-job training experience, graduate fellows will be mentored by a) the professional research staff, who will serve as the core research and policy analysts responding to client analytic demands; and b) senior fellows both social and clinical scientists in the conduct of interdisciplinary research. These senior fellows will draw upon their own disciplinary expertise as part of a team-science approach to conducting research. Findings from this research and research conducted elsewhere will be translated into policy analysis aimed at assisting decision-makers to formulate policy, make more informed decisions and implement policy solutions.

The focus of our research will be on the primary prevention of illness and disease and the promotion of health and well-being, as well as on health system financing and delivery issues. A useful framework for thinking about the opportunities for the RWJF Center to contribute to our knowledge is to focus on the trajectory of health disparities.

Source: Prevention Institute, 2008
Eliminating the health disparities observed in our society offers a framework for focusing on the social determinants of health as well as the health care system issues that derive from inequities in our society. Each segment of this trajectory offers opportunities for RWJF Center Senior Fellows and Graduate Fellows to contribute to new knowledge and to develop innovative analytic approaches to addressing these issues. By focusing on what social science does best, which is to investigate the core factors of social, economic and political environments that contribute to our society’s inequities and health disparities, we can formulate better health policy. We also want policies that will affect the decisions individuals and families make, and that address the health care system issues that have an impact on health outcomes for individuals, families and communities.

By directing our efforts toward research on primary prevention, we broaden our ability to make societal changes through health policy that recognizes that other social policies such as those surrounding housing, the environment, the economy, agriculture and others contribute to improving our nation’s health. This approach emphasizes community orientation, interdisciplinary collaboration and organizational and governmental policy changes across multiple sectors of society. Primary prevention takes place on several different levels, each of which we need to better understand in order to know how best to:

- Strengthen individual knowledge and skills.
- Promote community education.
- Educate providers.
- Foster coalitions and networks.
- Change organizational practices.
- Influence policy and legislation through policy analysis.

Policy analysis is not well understood within many academic circles. Policy analysis blends the conceptual and methodological sophistication of social science with the understanding and commitment to applied research and analysis that is all too often missing.
Policy analysis is:

- Client-driven social science research that provides a scientific base for action. A coordinated research program can produce evidence that demonstrates the connections between community factors and improvements in health.

- A forum where interdisciplinary teams can address complex social, political and economic issues that are the root causes of disease and illness.

- A vehicle for establishing credibility in the political arena. Policy-makers demand that policy analysis rely on high-quality research and researchers who can translate findings into practical options for policy resolution.

**Leadership Development**

Leadership development of scholars and community members will support both research and community capacity-building. In the academic community, strong leadership is necessary among those who wish to conduct applied research, especially community-based, participatory research. We will develop leaders for the new scientific advances and the disciplines that will emerge from combining knowledge from the social sciences and the clinical sciences. Similarly, community partners often need assistance in developing the skills required to be true partners in research and policy analysis, and to pursue their policy advocacy agendas.

**Community Capacity-Building**

The RWJF Center will foster community resilience, that is, the ability of a community to recover from and/or thrive despite the prevalence of risk factors and adversity. A resilient community can be described as having social competence, problem-solving capacity, a sense of identity and hope for the future. A resilient community provides a trio of protective factors: caring relationships, high expectations and opportunities for participation. Prevention strategies in the past have largely focused on reducing risk factors, but equally important is building upon and enhancing resilience in communities.

Focusing on building community capacity and resilience brings community members into the process, and they feel a greater vested interest in successful change. Community members can apply new skills to address other health issues. And community members gain skills and a sense of efficacy that can permeate many aspects of their lives and can improve life outcomes for themselves and their children, our future doctoral fellows.
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National Advisory Committee Work Groups

Research/Policy-Making Linkages
Development and Marketing
Lifelong Learning
Women in Leadership.
PARTIAL LIST OF CURRENT AND PLANNED PROJECTS

Senior Fellow Seed Grants (Funded by the RWJF Center)

The Socioeconomic Impacts of Teenage Pregnancy: Disparities by Race and Ethnicity, P.I. Philip Ganderton, Ph.D. (Economics)
Willingness to Pay for Cancer Prevention: Identifying Disparities and Health Policy Implications, P.I. Alok Bohara, Ph.D. (Economics)
Assessment of Public Attitudes Toward Health Coverage Reform in New Mexico, P.I. Gabriel Sanchez, Ph.D. (Political Science)
Disciplinary Discretion in a Diverse Albuquerque High School: A Study of Racial, Ethnic, and Gender Disparities, co-P.I.s Nancy Lopez, Ph.D. and Jane Hood, Ph.D. (Sociology)
New Mexico School-based Obesity Prevention Policies: A Study of Community Perceptions in Underserved Minority Populations, co-P.I.s Janet McGrath, M.D., (Pediatrics) and Eva Caldera, J.D. (Law)
Drug Coverage, Utilization and Health in the Rheumatoid Arthritis Elderly Population, P.I. Nasreen Khan, Ph.D. (Pharmacy)
Child Healthy Weight in Albuquerque: Participatory Assessment for Health Policy, P.I. Celia Iriart, M.P.H. (Family & Community Medicine)
The Power and Sustainability in Health Policy Development, P.I. Nina Wallerstein, Dr.P.H. (Family & Community Medicine)
Systemic Review of Health Professional-led Diabetes Lifestyle Interventions, P.I. Dennis Raisch, Ph.D. and Matthew Borrego, Ph.D. (Pharmacy)
Fiscal Burdens for Children with Pulmonary Conditions, P.I. Marie Lobo, Ph.D., R.N., F.A.A.N. (Nursing)

Projects Initiating May 2008

Evaluation of Native American Research Centers for Health Grants Program, Indian Health Service, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), P.I. Robert Otto Valdez, Ph.D.
Quality Improvement Institute, State of New Mexico Team Lead, AcademyHealth, Commonwealth Fund, P.I. Robert Otto Valdez, Ph.D.
Albuquerque Area Quality of Care Improvement Consortium, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Submitted in partnership with the New Mexico Medical Review
Commission, co-P.I.s Patricia Montoya, R.N., M.P.A. and Robert Otto Valdez, Ph.D.

**Proposals Submitted – Selected Examples**

Educating State Legislatures on Cardiovascular Disease Prevention, National Association of Latino Elected & Appointed Officials, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, DHHS. Subcontract: RWJF Center for Health Policy, P.I. Robert Otto Valdez, Ph.D.

Cost of Providing Care in “Two Stars” Daycare Centers, New Mexico Children, Family, & Youth Department, P.I. TBA

Evaluation of First Born, a Home Visitation Program for Santa Fe County, Smith Family Foundation. Submitted in partnership with RAND Population Program, Santa Monica, Calif., P.I. Rebecca Kilburn, Ph.D., Subcontract P.I. Robert Otto Valdez, Ph.D.

Evaluation of First Born in Rio Arriba and Taos Counties, Health Services and Resources Administration, DHHS. Submitted in partnership with RAND Population Program, Santa Monica, Calif. P.I. Rebecca Kilburn, Ph.D., Subcontract P.I. Robert Otto Valdez, Ph.D.

Taos Planning Grant for a Community Health Center, Bureau of Primary Care, Health Services and Resources Administration, DHHS. Submitted by Taos Hospital with needs assessment subcontract to RWJF Center for Health Policy. Subcontract P.I. Robert Otto Valdez, Ph.D.

**Proposal Supports – Selected Examples**

Rural Health Center Proposal, University of West Virginia, collaborating faculty: Robert Otto Valdez, Ph.D.

Alcohol and Drug Abuse Training Grant renewal, University of New Mexico Center for Alcohol, Substance Abuse Research, collaborating faculty: Robert Otto Valdez, Ph.D.

University of New Mexico Clinical and Translational Science Center, NIH, collaborating faculty: Robert Otto Valdez, Ph.D., Nina Wallerstein, Ph.D.