Indiana University
School of Public Health-Bloomington

NEW FACULTY & POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS 2023
Dear Students, Staff, Faculty, Emeriti, Alumni, Partners, and Friends of the School of Public Health-Bloomington,

It gives me great pleasure to introduce our newest faculty members and postdoctoral fellows.

In doing so, I offer you that human hearts and minds are the engines of new knowledge, and social networks form the highways of its conveyance.

Indiana University President Emeritus Michael A. McRobbie, in his speech at the unveiling of his presidential portrait this summer, said, “From the very beginning, universities have to a greater or lesser degree pursued three principal missions—to pursue knowledge, to transmit knowledge, and to preserve knowledge.” One of our goals in the School of Public Health-Bloomington is to conduct, disseminate, and translate research and creative activity to advance knowledge and health worldwide. What are the engines of this advancement? Our people. Having the right people in the right places is essential. Current faculty, staff, and students have worked diligently this past year to recruit an amazing number of amazing people. Extraordinary donors have helped by funding endowed professorships; the provost and president provided funding to get the best and brightest; and our faculty, staff, and students did the hard work of recruiting.

We are beyond excited about the people we are bringing in. We know from Geoffrey West’s book Scale that the more people one has in a network, the more the ideas snap, crackle, and pop—and the more advancement happens, even on a per-person basis. We know from Eric Weiner’s book The Geography of Genius that the insights of genius spark when people from diverse places, disciplines, and backgrounds come together, allowing for the genesis of ideas. That is why we have recruited with diversity in mind: To bring people with exciting ideas together in an environment where mentorship, collaboration, and the elevation of truth drives innovation and discovery.

In their article “Labor advantages drive the greater productivity of faculty at elite universities,” published last fall in the journal Science Advances, Zhang et al. say, “The disproportionate scientific productivity of elite researchers can be largely explained by their substantial labor advantage rather than inherent differences in talent.” In other words, productivity is at its highest when faculty members have big teams, which include postdoctoral fellows, and we are delighted to welcome our newest postdoctoral fellows to the SPH-B family.
We know the importance of bringing together people of different skills from the interactions of astronomer Tycho Brahe and mathematician Johannes Kepler, each of whose work would have been meaningless without the skills of the other. Tycho measured the positions of the planets, while Kepler used those measurements to determine the orbital motions of the planets, ultimately leading to an understanding of the elliptical orbit of the heavenly bodies. We know from Albert Einstein’s experience of the Olympia Academy, a group of three friends who met to discuss philosophy and physics, the importance of dialogue in moving science forward. We know from James Watson and Francis Crick’s interactions with Rosalind Franklin that their discovery of the helical structure of DNA was not theirs alone but a group effort. We know that Joseph Priestley, who is credited with discovering oxygen (and carbonated water), benefited from his interactions in the Lunar Society of Birmingham and his exchange of ideas with other great minds like Benjamin Franklin and Antoine Lavoisier. We look forward to the brilliant ideas to come from the relationships that develop within our ever larger and more vibrant community of scholars.

As you welcome our new faculty and postdoctoral fellows to Bloomington, remember that it can be hard to move to a new place. It is physically exhausting and mentally taxing to adjust to change, and many of our newest Hoosiers bring along spouses, partners, children, and dogs and cats who all need help, advice, and friendship. Reach out. Invite them on a hike or to dinner. Walk by their office and say hello. Invite them to work on a project or offer to help them with their projects. Take them to your favorite restaurant, bring them a plate of brownies, show them kindness. Show them that we are a community.

I hope you enjoy reading about your newest colleagues in the pages that follow. I very much look forward to seeing what we can accomplish together.

Thank you,

David B. Allison, Ph.D.
Dean
Dr. Keith joins SPH-B after serving as associate dean for faculty and professor of kinesiology at the IUPUI School of Health and Human Sciences. She earned a B.S. in exercise science from Howard University, an M.S. in exercise science from the University of Rhode Island, a Ph.D. in exercise physiology from the University of Connecticut, and an M.S. in clinical research from the IU School of Medicine. Prior to her appointment at IUPUI, Dr. Keith served as an assistant professor of kinesiology and health at the University of Southern Indiana.

Her research interest focuses on designing and implementing physical-activity access and interventions to decrease health disparities. She uses community-based research methods to disseminate findings and inform systemic change.

As an administrator, Dr. Keith’s goal is to lead collaborative research and academic environments where students, faculty, and staff can exceed their educational and professional goals. She supports accountability, equity, and social justice that strives for fairness and embraces differences in opinion. Dr. Keith is an elected fellow of the National Academy of Kinesiology and served as the president-elect (2019), president (2020), immediate past-president (2021), and second past-president (2022) of the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM).

Dr. Keith enjoys sitting in the sun and reading autobiographies in the summer—and watching football and basketball year-round. She enjoys spending time and space with friends, something that she especially missed during the pandemic. She also loves all things Disney.
Dr. Rust completed his Ph.D. in nutritional biology from the University of California, Davis where he focused on metabolic physiology. He served as a postdoctoral research fellow at the USDA-ARS Grand Forks Human Nutrition Research Center in Grand Forks, North Dakota, and as a postdoctoral research associate in the Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine at Washington State University.

His academic interests lie in understanding the role of gut-derived metabolites in modulating metabolic health. He sees the gut microbiota and microbiome as key mediators in this process and attempts to link the ecosystem of the gut to metabolites that influence metabolism directly and through gene expression.

Dr. Rust enjoys the outdoors, hiking, camping, and in a distant life he once was an avid mountain biker. He hopes to revive that interest now that he and his wife are settled in Bloomington. He loves to cook, sing, and play guitar.
Funmilola (Funmi) Ayeni, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Environmental and Occupational Health

Dr. Ayeni earned an M.Sc. and Ph.D. in pharmaceutical microbiology from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. She completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the Institute of International Education at Vassar College and then received an appointment as an assistant professor in the Department of Biology at Simmons University in Boston, Massachusetts.

Her research focuses on the pathogenic, beneficial, and symbiotic relationship of microorganisms with humans/animals. Her recent research interests include the effects of nutrition, air quality, and various environmental factors on the gut microbiota of rural and urban populations.

Dr. Ayeni loves parks, beaches and attending churches. Her favorite city in the world is Venice.

Grace Sembajwe, Sc.D.
Professor
Environmental and Occupational Health

Dr. Sembajwe earned an Sc.D. in epidemiology from the University of Massachusetts Lowell and completed a postdoctoral research fellowship in society, human development, and health at the Harvard School of Public Health. She also served as a National Cancer Institute Fellow in Cancer Prevention and Control at the Dana Farber Cancer Institute’s Center for Community-based Research in Boston, Massachusetts.

Dr. Sembajwe is a certified industrial hygienist with more than two decades’ experience in clinical sciences and exposure assessment. Her research interests include the multi-factorial contributors to early mortality in occupational cohorts by integrating qualitative and quantitative information about the environment, psychosocial factors, physiological burden, and exposure modeling with multilevel analysis. Her recent work involves natural language processing for coding and developing job-task exposure matrices to better understand the role of occupation in population health, global burden of disease, and community resilience.

When not juggling her family’s schedule, Dr. Sembajwe enjoys word puzzles, reading, swimming, and running. She also loves traveling and mountain climbing.
Dr. Camplain earned an M.S.P.H. and Ph.D. in epidemiology from the Gillings School of Global Health at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She has served as a postdoctoral scholar and assistant professor at the Center for Health Equity Research at the University of Northern Arizona. She also serves as affiliated faculty at the SEICHE Center for Health and Justice at the Yale School of Medicine.

Her research combines epidemiologic methods and community-based participatory research to determine how the cultural, social, structural, and political environments in correctional facilities impact health among incarcerated people, particularly those at the intersection of being indigenous and incarcerated. Ricky currently has an NIMHD K01 and an RCMI research project on physical activity and sedentary behavior in correctional facilities.

Dr. Camplain and her family love hiking and have explored 38 of the national parks—with hopes to see all of them. She also is an avid beader and uses traditional indigenous beading practices.
Dr. Roy earned an M.A. and Ph.D. in economics from Wayne State University. She served as a senior biostatistician at the Center for Health Equity Research at Northern Arizona University before being appointed an assistant professor in the College of Health Sciences at NAU.

Dr. Roy is a health economist and gerontologist with expertise in advanced statistical methodologies and econometrics. Her research lies at the intersection of aging and health services, and she employs robust analytical techniques to unravel complex healthcare challenges. Using Medicare and other administrative claims databases, her research aims to improve the utilization and value of acute and post-acute care for older adults through evidence-based practice. She is a co-investigator on an AHRQ R01 project, which evaluates post-acute care utilization between Medicare Advantage and fee-for-service beneficiaries, employing advanced causal inference methods. She strives to advance healthcare outcomes for older adults.

She enjoys cozying up with a good book, nestled among her unruly gang of houseplants. She lovingly refers to them as her “statistically significant green companions,” conducting impromptu photosynthesis experiments and hoping they don’t form a rebellion against her gardening skills. At other times, she enjoys a good hike.

Dr. Turi completed an M.S. in agricultural and applied economics and a Ph.D. in community health from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. He served as a postdoctoral research fellow in the Division of Allergy, Pulmonary, and Critical Care Medicine at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine. Upon completion of his fellowship, he was appointed a research assistant professor at Vanderbilt. He also serves as an instructor of ThriveDX data science bootcamp courses at the University of Wisconsin; University of Nevada, Las Vegas; and California State University, Long Beach.

Dr. Turi’s primary research goal is to understand how potentially modifiable environmental exposures during pregnancy and early childhood contribute to the development of asthma and allergy syndromes in children. He is specifically interested in understanding the harmful impacts of exposures such as respiratory infections, medications, diet, and environmental pollutants on the developing metabolic and immune systems mediating childhood asthma development. His distinguished body of work has earned him several fellowships and career-development grants including an NIH K01. When not working, Dr. Turi enjoys spending time with his family, hiking, and playing pick-up soccer.
Edlin Garcia, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Health & Wellness Design

Dr. Garcia graduated with a Ph.D. in health behavior from the SPH-B Department of Applied Health Science. She holds a bachelor’s degree in global studies from the University of California, Santa Barbara and an M.P.H. from the University of South Florida.

Her research investigates the intersection of mental health literacy and help-seeking behaviors, with the goal of promoting mental well-being in the workplace. Through interdisciplinary approaches, she strives to develop effective interventions, tools, and resources for enhancing mental health understanding and support within the workplace.

Dr. Garcia enjoys spending time with her puppy Sydney, volunteering with the Crisis Text Line, and solving puzzles.

Jordan Hill, Ph.D.
Assistant Research Scientist
Health & Wellness Design

Dr. Hill earned an M.S. and Ph.D. in industrial engineering from Purdue University before completing postdoctoral research appointments at Indiana University School of Medicine and the RxD lab at Purdue University. She joined the SPH-B Department of Health & Wellness Design in November 2022.

She is a human factors engineer and systems thinker with a passion for using technology to solve complex problems. Her research applies systems engineering principles to understand and assess the needs of users, and she employs human-centered design techniques to create technological interventions that meet those needs. Her current research focuses on promoting healthy aging, including using technology to support informal caregivers of people with dementia and to assist older adults in making safe medication decisions.

In her free time, Dr. Hill enjoys sewing, knitting, cross-stitching, and hanging out with her husband and their two rescue dogs. She also volunteers as the Events/Meet & Greet Director for Prison Greyhounds. She grew up in Alberta, Canada and believes there is no more beautiful place in the world than the Canadian Rockies (especially Lake Louise and Banff National Park).
Dr. Lassell earned a Ph.D. in occupational therapy from the College of Health and Human Sciences at Colorado State University and served as a postdoctoral associate at New York University’s Rory Meyers College of Nursing.

She is a board-certified occupational therapist who focuses on designing community-based interventions to improve brain health and health equity. Her research interests include participatory action research, nature-based interventions, health equity, Alzheimer’s disease, and mild cognitive impairment. She is conducting two studies to co-design, culturally tailor, and pilot a green activity program for Chinese Americans—and another activity program for Hispanic/Latino groups—living with memory loss and their care partners.

Dr. Lassell loves running, cycling, and spending time with her husband and two kids.

Dr. McIntire completed her Ph.D. in leisure behavior from SPH-B and an M.S. in exercise science from the School of Physical Education & Tourism Management at IUPUI. She serves as the executive director of New Leaf, New Life, a Bloomington nonprofit organization that supports individuals who are currently/formerly incarcerated.

She is a certified therapeutic recreation specialist (CTRS) and has years of experience facilitating adventure therapy programming with veterans, youth on probation, individuals in recovery, and many others. She served as the president-elect, president, and past-president of Recreation Therapists of Indiana (RTI) from 2020–2023.

Outside of work, Dr. McIntire enjoys doing anything outdoors—hiking, hunting for mushrooms, camping, playing kickball with friends, doing yard work, etc. She loves playing games with friends, especially if they involve strategy! During the winter months she enjoys watching whatever reality TV show is currently trending while snuggling with her three cats. During breaks or long weekends, you’ll most likely find Dr. McIntire in a neighboring state with her partner Sarah, at a concert, or thrift shopping.
Dr. Thomas completed an M.S. in tourism management and Ph.D. in leisure behavior from SPH-B. She has 10 years of experience in the alcohol industry where she is experienced in project and product administration including event planning, public relations, and marketing operations. Dr. Thomas was also a consultant for safety and risk management procedures at events. Her research interests include large-scale event evacuations, risk management, and scholarship of teaching.

Dr. Thomas is married with three children: Ava (8), Ezekiel (6), and Micah (2). She is a very busy mom who owns and manages three Airbnbs. She loves travel, food, and attending events of all sizes!

Edmond Ramly, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Health & Wellness Design

Dr. Ramly earned an M.S. in decisions sciences & operational research and a Ph.D. in Health Systems Engineering from the University of Wisconsin–Madison. He completed a postdoctoral fellowship in implementation science at UW–Madison before receiving his first academic appointment as an assistant professor in their Department of Family Medicine and Community Health.

He aims to turn health science into better health for everyone, using systems engineering and implementation science. He brings this dual expertise to SPH-B as the founding Director of the program of Design and Implementation Sciences and Associate Professor of Health and Wellness Design. Dr. Ramly’s 15 years of research on digital and organizational innovations produced effective and broadly implemented solutions that reduced translational and disparities gaps in chronic care and prevention including heart health. He has received funding from both the NIH (NCATS) and AHRQ (K01, R21, R18, U18), and served on AHRQ national scientific review committees.

Dr. Ramly’s hobbies include hiking, biking, painting, cooking, and gardening. He can talk for hours about improv acting and coaching, which he’s been doing since 2013! He hopes you join him for walking meetings, Lebanese meals, and fireside chats. Dr. Ramly’s current fascinations lie in green teas and furniture upcycling.

Celina Thomas, Ph.D.
Lecturer
Health & Wellness Design

Dr. Thomas completed an M.S. in tourism management and Ph.D. in leisure behavior from SPH-B.
POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS

ENVIRONMENTAL AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

Sharmin Sultana, Ph.D.
Postdoctoral Fellow
Environmental and Occupational Health

EPIDEMIOLOGY AND BIOSTATISTICS

Deependra Thapa, Ph.D.
Postdoctoral Fellow
Epidemiology and Biostatistics

Maryam Nazemipour, Ph.D.
Postdoctoral Fellow
Epidemiology and Biostatistics
DEPARTMENTS & CHAIRS

DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED HEALTH SCIENCE
Eric Walsh-Buhi, Ph.D.
Department Chair
Professor

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH
Patricia Silveyra, Ph.D.
Department Chair
Anthony D. Pantaleoni Eminent Scholar
Associate Professor

DEPARTMENT OF EPIDEMIOLOGY AND BIOSTATISTICS
Douglas Landsittel, Ph.D.
Department Chair
James A. Caplin, M.D. Chair in Evidence-Based Public Health
Professor

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & WELLNESS DESIGN
Richard Holden, Ph.D.
Department Chair
Dean’s Eminent Scholar
Professor

DEPARTMENT OF KINESIOLOGY
Ellen Evans, Ph.D.
Department Chair
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