

# EL FARO

La Voz de la Red

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## Cultivating Effective Mentoring Relationships

by Alice Cepeda, PhD, University of Southern California and Kathryn M. Nowotny, MA, University of Colorado Boulder



Mentoring relationships are key to successfully navigating academia. Finding a "good" mentor and actually being a "good" mentor are often difficult and ambiguous processes. We, Alice and Kathryn, have established a beneficial long-term mentoring relationship and want to share some of our wisdom and insights.

Mentoring is a collaborative relationship that should be mutually beneficial for both the mentor and the mentee. Mentoring relationships are often seen as one-way with the mentor guiding the mentee. But a successful mentoring relationship involves career socialization, inspiration and belief in each other and promoting excellence and passion for work through guidance, protection, support, networking and a strong personal relationship. There are four points that we believe mentees should consider when cultivating effective mentoring relationships.

**1. When seeking out a new mentor, mentees must assess the current state of their mentoring relationships.** Identify the specific mentoring

functions that your current relationships provide, and what functions are missing. This type of assessment can help you target your future efforts and provide important insights. For instance, there are no drug abuse researchers in Kathryn's home department, so Alice fills a very specific function by introducing Kathryn to literature, news, and social networks (such as the NHSN) in the field of drug abuse research.

**2. Mentees must identify specific and realistic goals in terms of what you want to accomplish.** This means looking at the current state of your mentoring relationships and setting some goals regarding what is missing and how you might want to fill those gaps. Think about people you have known or worked with, and have lost contact with. Also, remember peers in different functions, departments or locations. For example, from 2008–2011, Alice was Kathryn's supervisor at the UH Center for Drug & Social Policy Research. When Kathryn began her PhD program in 2011 she wanted to obtain a NIDA predoctoral award. Kathryn sought the mentorship of Alice, due to her extensive experience with NIDA funding, and Alice became a very important mentor in Kathryn's application for a NRSA fellowship.

**3. Once you have set your goals, begin the process of cultivating relationships.** Don't simply contact a person on your list and ask him/her, "Can you mentor me?" You must work at cultivating mentoring relationships in the same manner as you would any other relationship. Find out what is important or going on in this person's career or life. This process may seem scary, but getting to know each other in an informal setting (such as happy hour) will enrich the mentoring relationship and can lead to a strong friendship.

**4. Remember, this is a relationship first and foremost.** So that means you have to take initiative and be proactive in order for it to be successful and must actively seek opportunities to interact and engage. This can be through formal mentoring mechanisms such as the NHSN's Interdisciplinary Research Training Institute (IRTI) or through informal get-togethers at conferences. Another strategy is to develop a "mentoring network." This can be achieved by introducing a mentor at another institution to key faculty in your department or arranging for your mentor to give a

colloquium at your home institution. Similarly, your mentor may have a research team that the mentee can become part of during the course of the relationship. For instance, Kathryn became an integral member of Alice's existing research team with Avelardo Valdez and Charles Kaplan. As a team we have collaborated on grant applications, manuscripts, and conference presentations (and now El Faro articles!) for the past five years. This team has been extremely productive, beneficial, and fun for all.



Overall, we can say that our successful mentoring relationship can be attributed to five key attributes: clear expectations, mutual respect, reciprocity, shared scientific interests (i.e., minority marginalized drug using populations) and shared values/common background that goes beyond race and ethnicity. Moreover, the success of this mentoring relationship can be measured by Kathryn's numerous accomplishments (NIH Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award Fellowship and NSF Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant, recent PhD candidacy, and publications). However, and more importantly, this mentoring relationship has developed into a great friendship!

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### ***The Road Less Travelled: Perspectives on Effective Mentoring***

by Erika Perez, PhD, University of Pennsylvania and Laura E. O'Dell, PhD, University of Texas El Paso

Our mentoring relationship began three years ago with a formalized mentoring contract arranged through the Interdisciplinary Research Training Institute (IRTI). The IRTI focuses on Hispanic drug use and is an initiative of the National Hispanic Science Network. The goal is to promote the career development of early career scientists through participation in an 11-day summer training program followed by organized mentorship activities for two years. During the summer training program, each mentee was required to identify a mentor from outside of his/her institution. The contract provided an opportunity to express one another's expectations of the mentoring relationship and to formalize long-term goals. This was helpful in initiating our interactions from the beginning. The program also provided travel support to attend professional conferences and to visit one another's respective institutions.

This reflection summarizes our presentation on mentoring that was delivered at the IRTI 2014 Scientific Conference. The mentoring panel was part of the final meeting of the IRTI and the group consisted of former mentees and their mentors in the program. Our presentation allowed us to provide retrospective feedback to the IRTI members and to provide tips on how to develop an effective mentoring relationship. Below we summarize the main points of our presentation.

#### **Developing your academic family tree**

There are few opportunities in graduate school that provide training in effective mentoring. In behavioral neuroscience, the mentoring relationship requires close interactions to pass on complex research methods, theoretical concepts, and ethical principles. An understanding of one's academic history can elucidate how different methods and theoretical schools of thought have developed over time. Knowledge of your family tree can also be important for fostering a support network at the beginning of your research career. These academic relatives can also provide opportunities for training and/or collaborative

science. Knowing the roots of our training can also provide motivation to invest in future generations by paying forward the opportunities that were given to us. The desire to train future scientists is particularly important for mentees from disadvantaged backgrounds that often lack the cultural capital to succeed in academia. The exercise of sharing your family tree with trainees also fosters an appreciation for science as a community of individuals that have endured similar rigorous training experiences.



#### **Mentor commentary by Dr. O'Dell**

Throughout my career, I have observed that effective mentors are able to strike a balance between mentor, advisor, and confidant. Over time, I have learned to enjoy the process of mentoring, which can be time-consuming but also rewarding. Therefore, I have learned to organize my time with daily, weekly, and yearly goals. This has been helpful as I balance the needs of my mentees with that of my young children. Each day I practice mindfulness to dedicate myself entirely to what is in front of me. This requires a strong support system (both at home and in the laboratory) that allows easy transitions from work to home and is reliable when I am not present. For my young daughters, my goal is to demonstrate to them the joy of having a fulfilling profession so that they can live in a manner that expresses who they are. For my mentees, I invest time in learning about the different factors that may influence their career development and I am open to their different needs. I have also learned to draw boundaries and

have high expectations of my students. With time and a deep desire to become a more effective mentor, it is my hope that I continue to better serve my student mentees.

My experiences with Erika have been truly rewarding because she is a bright and hard-working graduate student. Transitioning from a small undergraduate school to a major research institute was challenging, and I found that what she needed most was to feel my sense of confidence in her. Our area of research overlaps quite well, and our discussions were easier given that I understood her data and the scientific journals in which she would be publishing her papers. She also taught me a great deal about nicotine and alcohol dependence in mice, and I benefited from our scientific conversations. Although our formal contract ended, I look forward to interacting with Erika as a friend and colleague in the future.

#### **Mentee commentary by Dr. Perez**

Throughout my education, I have been fortunate to have many mentors that have provided guidance and support for various stages of my development. My dissertation mentor recommended that I apply to the IRTI. She felt it was important for me to meet and form connections with other successful Hispanic researchers. When I attended the summer program, I was in my fifth year of graduate school. By that time, I had passed my comprehensive exams and had completed most of my dissertation research. Overall, I felt like I was on the right track academically, but at same time I felt a little lost. I wanted to graduate, but I was not sure what area I wanted to do my post-doctoral training in. At the same time, I was dealing with a lot of stress in my personal life, making it difficult to focus on moving on to the next phase of my career. I met Laura during the IRTI summer training and felt an instant connection with her. Since we worked in similar fields, it was easy and fun for us to discuss our research projects. She provided motivation as well as direction so that I could keep on track and graduate in a timely manner.

Most importantly, I felt that our face-to-face communications were the most impactful. Laura and I met annually at the NHSN Scientific Conference, where I also had the opportunity to meet other students from her lab. I also had the

opportunity to attend the Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco (SRNT) Annual Meeting with her. At SRNT, we roomed together and she introduced me to several successful researchers that I would not have had the confidence to approach on my own. Visiting Laura's institution was also really eye opening because I had received my bachelor's degree from a small public university where teaching was the primary focus and then transitioned to graduate school at a research-intensive institution. When I visited UTEP, I was able to discern my own desires to ultimately be at an institution that strikes a balance between research and teaching. I also observed that Laura is someone who values her family life, but also enjoys a successful research career. Laura and I have a similar background, so when I expressed some of my fears and concerns about academia and family, I really felt that she had a context for understanding my concerns. She also shared some of her own obstacles that she had to overcome; this was motivating because I realized that my goal of becoming an independent researcher was obtainable.

### **Lessons Learned in Mentorship**

There were several things that enabled us to cultivate a successful mentoring relationship. First, we have overlapping areas of research. This provided an immediate context for the literature and the expectations for success in our field. Second, we participated in a program that sponsored several in-person meetings. Erika's visit to UTEP overlapped with that of a distinguished drug abuse researcher who was visiting as a guest speaker. This allowed her to interact with the speaker and widen her scientific network. During her visit, she also gave a research presentation that allowed her to practice her dissertation defense and field questions prior to her defense. She also had the opportunity to meet with other graduate students and develop a network of peer mentors. They talked about post-doctoral positions, research data, and different scientific meetings that they attended. The meeting at UTEP helped us to establish an excellent rapport and we discussed personal matters that were also important to her career choices. This established a level of trust and openness that became a basis for our working relationship. We also attended a scientific meeting

together where we roomed with a well-known tobacco researcher. This person was able to provide her with good advice on her projects and her professional development. The in-person meetings were important to develop interactions and understand the important issues that were affecting Erika's career development. Lastly, we have similar ethnic and cultural backgrounds that have been beneficial to our mentoring relationship. As Mexican-American females from Texas, we share a deep understanding of cultural norms that have influenced our academic aspirations. We both easily recognize the lack of confidence that is often the result of implicit bias and discrimination. These common traits instilled a deep desire for the mentor to help the mentee succeed, and at the same time promote a sense of trust. As an underrepresented minority, there is a milieu of challenges for achieving academic success. Many of these can be attributed to a lack of cultural capital, which refers to the knowledge that is necessary for success in certain realms. Within academia, there is a language and behavioral pattern that is only understood with experience and proper mentoring. Taking the time to mentor students in the areas in which they lack cultural capital can be instrumental in promoting their success.

In the future, we look forward to developing our mentoring relationship into that of colleagues. We have invested time and effort into a relationship that has been mutually beneficial and rewarding. We hope that this summary fosters thought with regard to developing more effective mentoring relationships for other scientists.

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### **Welcome Message from the Co-Editors of El Faro: La Voz de la Red, Mrs. Meghan Lally and Ms. Felisa Gonzales**

Saludos! As many of you know, one of the primary goals of the National Hispanic Science Network (NHSN) is to foster the development and advancement of scientists dedicated to improving the health equity of Hispanics. The Interdisciplinary Research Institute (IRTI) is a program associated with the NHSN that merits particular attention for the tremendous support offered to early career scientists.



This edition of El Faro brings valuable mentoring tips and research findings presented at the recent IRTI Scientific Conference to the NHSN membership.

Dr. Valdez is the Principal Investigator for the IRTI which is supported by an R25 grant that has been funded three times since 2002. Since its inception, the IRTI has provided mentoring and support over a two-year period for over 100 pre-doctoral and post-doctoral students as well as early career faculty. Both Meghan and I have had the privilege of participating in the IRTI program. This program provides fellows with a 2-week course in interdisciplinary drug abuse research, training funds, and access to a senior faculty mentor. In June of this year, the third cohort of IRTI fellows (those selected in years 2010-2013, N=46) and their mentors gathered in Miami, FL for a scientific conference. Collectively, this group of promising early career investigators has published 190 manuscripts and 30 book chapters. They have also

submitted 30 grant applications, 15 of which have been funded.

In recognition of the important role that mentorship plays in career development, the Feature Article presents mentorship experiences from the perspectives of two mentors and mentees who have participated in the IRTI. Katherine Nowotny and Dr. Alice Cepeda, and Drs. Erika Perez and Laura O'Dell, describe their experiences cultivating effective mentoring relationships and share lessons they've learned. We are also very pleased to present career development advice from three esteemed and highly productive NHSN senior investigators/IRTI mentors - Dr. Eddie Castaneda, Dr. Hortensia Amaro, and Dr. Willy Prado - in the Career Diva section. For those individuals who are interested in both academic and non-academic careers, Dr. Danielle Ompad details her non-traditional path to academia in the Nuestra Voz section. In the International Front section, two IRTI fellows, Dr. Fatima Muñoz and Dr.

Argentina Servin, share findings from a recent publication (co-authored by two other NHSN members, Dr. Victoria Ojeda and Dr. María Luisa Zúñiga) on HIV and substance use among individuals living along the US-Mexico border. Dr. Miguel Cano and Dr. Yessenia Castro have also benefitted from the support available to early career NHSN members and are now giving back by serving as co-chairs of the Early Career Leadership Committee (ECLC). You can read about the ECLC, their backgrounds, and their plans for this committee in the Early Career section of this newsletter.

As early career investigators ourselves, we can attest to the myriad opportunities for mentorship and training that are available through the NHSN. In addition to the IRTI, another program that may be of interest is the Early Stage Career Mentoring program. Dr. Anthony is the Principal Investigator for this R25 grant that was awarded in 2011. The funding has been used to select a few early career scientists who hold positions as faculty or research staff each year to receive professional development support (including assistance with grant applications) and monies for pilot studies and conference travel. Three cycles of fellows are currently being supported. The next cycle of this prestigious program is contingent upon funding from NIDA. It is anticipated that applications will be accepted on a rolling basis beginning January 2015. NHSN will circulate updated information when it is available.

We encourage students and early career investigators to take advantage of the numerous opportunities for formal and informal mentorship with leading experts in the field of Latino drug abuse through the NHSN network. The upcoming NHSN International Conference in El Paso, TX presents a great opportunity to reach out, establish new relationships, and develop new research collaborations. Adelante!

**Felisa Gonzales and Meghan Lally**

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## Career Diva



**Dr. Amaro** has dramatically advanced the understanding of substance abuse disorder treatment, HIV prevention and other urgent public health challenges through a distinguished career that has spanned scholarly research, translation of science to practice, top-level policy consultation and service on four Institute of Medicine committees. She has authored more than 130 scholarly publications, many widely-cited, and she has made landmark contributions to improving behavioral health care in community-based organizations by launching addiction treatment programs that have helped thousands of families and informing practice in agencies around the world.

*Here she shares 10 career advice tips:*

**Play an active role in shaping how you are perceived** - Don't wait for others to recognize your value. In this day in age it is important to market and promote yourself. If you think this is not culturally consonant, think about the leaders that you admire. They may have demonstrated humility but they did not undervalue their worth or diminish the importance of their work and message. Read their biographies and put their pictures in your workspace to inspire you.

Here are some of my favorites:

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." Margaret Mead

"Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men

and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world." — Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed

"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy." Martin Luther King, Jr.

"You are never strong enough that you don't need help." Cesar Chavez

"Deserve your dream." Octavio Paz

"Imagination is more important than knowledge." Albert Einstein

"You will face many defeats in your life but never let yourself be defeated." Maya Angelou

**Begin creating your "list of 10" now** – You will need a list of 10 people in your discipline that can evaluate you when you apply for Promotion and Tenure. Start to nurture these relationships early on. These should be people who have not published or engaged in research with you. The "arms length" rule is used to decide external reviewers so they should be leaders in the field who know your work (e.g., those you cite, etc).

**Make your research visible** – Be visible on Research Gate and be sure to share your success with your Department Chair, Dean and networks related to your area of expertise (e.g., awards, honors, and private grants that they may not otherwise know about).

**Partner with a community organization** – This can be a rich opportunity for collaboration and also enhance your credibility. Collaborations may be in the form of sites for studies, service on your research advisory boards, service on their agency boards and providing consultation on how they might improve outcome indicators and data to demonstrate their efficacy.

**Assume a leadership role in professional organizations** – This will provide an opportunity to make yourself known in your field and to "give back." This is connected to Tip #2 above: you can meet individuals who later can be external reviewers for your tenure and promotion.

**Evaluate career opportunities carefully and don't do it alone** – Don't be shy about reaching out to external mentors and colleagues for advice. Colleagues may be able to provide information about salary norms at another institution; mentors can provide guidance for how to negotiate your salary and items to ask for (see #7 below).

**Consider what is important to you when accepting a new position** – Will you have travel support to attend conferences? Do you need statistical support and space for your lab? Does the institution offer family friendly policies (e.g., family leave time for pregnancy)? If you are on the tenure clock and decide to move to another institution, make sure to negotiate a tenure clock at the new institution that works for you. If you are tenured, make sure to negotiate your sabbatical leave so you don't have to start that clock over again.

**Discern other "opportunities" carefully** – Participate only where you can be effective, only do things that can further your career and with collaborators you enjoy working with.

**Know your value at each stage of your career** – Starting salary is critical for your first job as it will be the baseline for future positions. Investigate what the mean salary is for your discipline. Remember, you are above average so negotiate that way.

**Ground yourself in your own history** – Know your values and passion. Be clear with yourself about what inspires you and your aspirations. Know whose shoulders you stand on and who stands behind you. You may feel alone at times but know that many before you (e.g., in your family, in your country of origin and in your community and profession) prepared the road for you to be where you are.



**Dr. Guillermo Prado** is currently the Leonard M. Miller Professor of Public Health Sciences and the Director of the Division of Prevention Science and Community Health at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine's Department of Public Health Sciences. Prado's research focuses on the prevention of risky health behaviors, including drug use, unsafe sexual behavior, lack of physical activity, and poor dietary intake, associated with the top leading causes of morbidity and mortality in adolescents, and Hispanic youth in particular. His program of research on Hispanic adolescent health has been continuously funded by the NIH since the first year of his doctoral program. He has been PI, Co-PI, co-investigator, or senior mentor of HIV, substance abuse, and obesity prevention studies totally approximately \$50 million of NIH and CDC funding. One of these studies is an effectiveness/Stage III study of Familias Unidas [United Families in English], one of the few preventive interventions found be efficacious in preventing/reducing substance use, internalizing and externalizing symptoms and disorders, and HIV risk behaviors among Hispanic youth. In another currently NIMHD/NIH funded study, Prado and colleagues are adapting Familias Unidas for obesity prevention. Additionally, Prado is also the Co-Director of Training for the NIDA/NIH Center for Prevention Implementation Methodology for Drug Abuse and Sexual Risk Behavior and Director of Training for the NCI/NIH South Florida Cancer Health Disparities Center.

Here he shares his top 10 pieces of career advice:

**10. Have thick skin** - Rejection is common. It's not personal and can help improve your written products (manuscripts, grant applications, etc.).

**9. Listen to your mentors** - We should all have more than one mentor. A team of different types of mentors (peers, faculty, etc.) in many domains (content, professional development, finance and administration, etc.) is encouraged.

**8. Network and surround yourself with the very best** - Those around you can inspire and support you. Recognize your own strengths and weaknesses – you don't have to be the best at everything if you have a great team.

**7. It's not a 40-hour work week** - Expect to put in extra time to achieve your professional goals.

**6. Don't burn bridges** - Collaboration is becoming more and more important in our line of work. Maintain relationships so you can draw on expertise and skills as needed.

**5. Get plenty of feedback** - Have your peers and mentors read your work before submitting it for review. They will help identify weak points that external reviewers would pick up on. Also, elicit feedback from Project Officers before submitting a grant.

**4. Always remember why you do what you do** - Thinking about the impact you will have can strengthen your motivation and enhance your work.

**3. Learn to say "No"** - No one can do it all. Be selective with your time. If you have a hard time saying no, find someone who can say no for you.

**2. Learn to delegate** - It can be hard to give up control, but the people you charge with responsibilities will surprise you with their capacity and creativity.

**1. Stay humble** - Your hard work will result in success. Throughout it all, remember where you came from and who helped you get there.

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**Dr. Castañeda** investigates plasticity in presynaptic mechanisms that modulate neurotransmitter release during changes in behavior due to neurodegeneration or substance abuse. It is interesting to speculate how fundamental mechanisms that govern learning and memory might serve for compensation in surviving dopamine neurons of the brain compromised by Parkinson's disease and how these same mechanisms might play a role in the sensitization of dopamine neurons by repeated exposure to stimulant drugs. Currently funded research seeks to understand how sensitization of amphetamine-evoked dopamine release may produce cross-sensitization to stimulant drug-conditioned environmental cues or stress. To accomplish this, Dr. Castañeda incorporates in vivo intracerebral microdialysis to collect dopamine overflow evoked by drug and electrical stimulation of dopamine pathways. Understanding the principles of cross-sensitization will provide insights regarding drug craving and recidivism in recovering addicts.

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## Nuestra Voz - First Person Column

### Navigating a Non-traditional Path By Danielle Ompad

My name is Danielle Ompad and I am an epidemiologist. I study illicit drug use, typically in community-based samples of current and former drug users. A few months ago I was asked to speak about my nontraditional path to a research career at the NHSN Interdisciplinary Research Training Institute's Scientific Conference. Many of my fellow panelists had more traditional research

trajectories, completing doctoral studies followed by postdocs, on to tenure-track faculty positions and finally ending with a tenured position at a university. My path has been a little bit different and I think that my story provides an alternative, for better or for worse, for researchers-in-training to think about. After I completed my graduate work, I was a researcher at a private, non-profit institution. After almost ten years at the non-profit, I decided to take a non-tenure-track position at New York University, a large, private university.



There are few things I've experienced across my career that might be helpful to researchers-in-training. I want to share a few pieces of advice based on my experiences.

**First**, it is important to follow your dreams - but don't have blinders on. Let me tell a story: I wanted to be an epidemiologist from about the age of 13. This makes me a little weird, because most 13-year-olds did not know what an epidemiologist is. In fact, many of my classmates in graduate school didn't think about epidemiology until they were well into careers in other disciplines such as medicine, engineering, and even business. I read a novel by Robin Cook called *Outbreak* in middle school. The novel was about a female epidemiologist who was in the CDC's Epidemiology Intelligence Service (EIS). Her character was basically a disease detective, running all over the United States trying to figure out why there were outbreaks of Ebola - a little far-fetched at the time (but now, maybe not so much). I read her story and decided that's what I wanted to do. I wanted to be an EIS officer, at age 13.

More than a decade later and a few months before defending my dissertation, I asked one of my

advisors for letter of recommendation for the EIS application. He said, "I'd be happy to give you one, but why do you want to be an EIS officer? You already have a PhD in epidemiology; this program is designed to teach you to be an epidemiologist." Well, this rocked my world. This simple and brief conversation made me do a little soul-searching. Do I really want to be an EIS officer? Is this really my dream now that I've just about finished my doctoral studies? And to my surprise, I decided I didn't want to be an EIS officer anymore. So I have to thank my mentor for taking the time to asking me, "Why?" This was the first time, but not the last time where I found that I needed to pause, look inward, and reflect. I needed to reflect on my goals and my progress towards my goals. Sometimes my goals have changed. Other times I have continued on the path. But that self-assessment, coupled with a little introspection has been helpful to me.

**Second**, supplement your education. I looked for opportunities to supplement my education. For example, as an undergraduate, I participated in the Introduction to Biomedical Research Program which resulted in a year-long internship working in the Laboratory of Viral Diseases at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. As a graduate student, I was awarded a NIDA minority (now called diversity) supplement to one of my mentor's R01 grants. As a new investigator, I was awarded the NIH Loan Repayment Program for Health Disparities Research. At each stage of my career I have been afforded research opportunities through NIH diversity programs. These programs exist to increase diversity in science, which is important in terms of reducing disparities and improving the science.

**Third**, do not be afraid to ask for advice from trusted mentors when negotiating for a position. After I completed my graduate work, I had several job offers. One of them was a nine-month, tenure-track appointment at a university. When I got the offer I asked them, "What about the other three months of the year?" They told me that it was just a nine-month appointment. I was thinking to myself, "Am I going to be able to pay rent over the summer? And what about those looming student loan payments?" So here's what you need to know: nobody in my immediate family has a graduate degree and, unfortunately, I didn't think to ask my

trusted mentors about nine-month appointments. I did not understand how academia worked and that nine-month appointments were par for the course. Maybe I was a little embarrassed because I didn't understand. I'm going to tell it to you like we say in Hawai'i: "No be shame." Don't be embarrassed or ashamed to consult with your mentors during this process.

I ultimately accepted a junior research investigator position from a private nonprofit institution that focused on research, policy, and programming. It was a great opportunity, it was in New York City, there was no teaching, and I would have protected time to write papers and grants. Did I mention it had the highest salary? I took that position and worked there for almost 10 years beginning as a junior investigator and ending as the interim director of a research center.

**Fourth**, if you start in a non-academic institution (e.g., at a non-profit, in industry, at a non-governmental organization, in the government, at an inter-governmental organization) make sure to think about whether you might want to go into academia. If academia could be in your future, consider finding an adjunct faculty opportunity where you can teach. Teaching as an adjunct may give you the ability to negotiate title, salary, and/or tenure clock. While at the non-profit, I became adjunct faculty at two local universities, teaching one to two classes per year. Previous teaching experience made a difference when I started looking for academic positions.

Finally, with respect to academic positions, it is important to understand what tenure and non-tenure track positions mean with in each institution. The parameters of these different types of appointments are different across institutions so ask a lot of questions. Ask about what percentage (if any) of your salary you need to bring in? What happens if your salary support falls short? Do you have to teach (or can you)? Can you get a start-up package? Can you be a PI?

I believe that there are multiple paths to a research career. I have enjoyed my non-traditional trajectory. I hope some of my experiences may be helpful to you.

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## Early Career Leadership Committee

by Miguel Ángel Cano, PhD, MPH and Yessenia Castro, PhD

We are excited to serve as the Co-Chairs of the National Hispanic Science Network's Early Career Leadership Committee (ECLC). We would also like to take a moment to thank Dr. Alice Cepeda for setting a high standard of accomplishments, and as she steps down as Chair of the ECLC, there is no doubt we have big shoes to fill. Nevertheless, we will continue promoting ECLC initiatives that create opportunities for success among graduate students and early career scientists of the National Hispanic Science Network on Drug Abuse (NHSN).

### About Your ECLC

The mission of the ECLC is "to provide early career scientists with valuable resources that will help meet the challenge of becoming an independent and successful researcher." The ECLC currently consists of approximately 10-12 early career NHSN members (graduate student, postdoc, instructor, or assistant professors) often referred to as the "core group." These individuals meet via conference calls approximately once per month to discuss numerous activities relevant to the early career membership of NHSN. The ECLC is highly involved with the planning of the NHSN's annual conference. We are charged with the selection of the Early Career Investigator conference speaker panel and the National Award of Excellence for Best Poster by a Young Investigator. In addition, we organize the Early Career Networking Mixer and Early Career Mentoring Luncheon. We hope you will join us for all of these ECLC events at the NHSN 14th Annual International Conference, September 3-6, 2014, in El Paso, Texas!

We also have activities outside of the Annual International Conference. Among these is the NHSN membership newsletter *El Faro: La Voz de la Red*, which is intended to serve as our lighthouse ("faro") and give voice to the NHSN members. The current co-editors of *El Faro* are ECLC members Ms. Meghan Lally and Dr. Felisa Gonzales. They have done an amazing job featuring NHSN member achievements and activities, as well as recruiting both early career senior researchers to contribute to the newsletter with stories of their career

experiences and tips for early career members. The ECLC has also organized the Mentoring Initiative where graduate students, post-doctoral trainees, and/or assistant professors can receive individualized feedback on theses, dissertations, manuscripts or presentations during a one hour teleconference or videoconference with other senior level research scientist members (more information can be found here: <http://www.the-NHSN.org/NewsandMedia/ElFaro>). None of these activities could be accomplished without the commitment and dedication of the ECLC "core group," and we are greatly indebted to Nicole "Nicky" Sardiña, NHSN National Office Manager, who is truly the engine that keeps the ECLC running. Please follow us on Twitter (@The NHSN) and "Like" us on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/NationalHispanicScienceNetwork>). You can support and stay connected with the ECLC thanks to our ECLC social media coordinators, Drs. Cristina Bares and Monica Ulibarri!

### About Your ECLC Co-Chairs

Taking on the role of ECLC Co-Chair is significant to us because we have benefited directly from the NHSN and ECLC throughout our professional development.



I, **Miguel Cano**, am an Assistant Professor in the Department of Epidemiology at Florida International University. As an undergraduate student at Arizona State University, the mentorship that I received from NHSN member Dr. Felipe González Castro was instrumental in my preparation for graduate school. Later, when I started work on my doctoral degree, Dr. Antonio Cepeda-Benito nominated me to the NHSN and provided me with guidance as a member of my dissertation committee. When I attended my first

NHSN conference in 2008, I felt a welcoming sense of family in recognizing how many of the people I admired were eager to help me succeed as a researcher conducting drug research among Hispanics. During the past two years I have served as an active member of the ECLC and have advanced my professional trajectory through participation in the Interdisciplinary Research Training Institute (IRTI) on Hispanic Drug Abuse.



I, **Yessenia Castro**, am an Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work at The University of Texas at Austin. I was first introduced to the NHSN as a postdoctoral fellow by Dr. Judy Arroyo, who served as my mentor during the 2009 American Psychological Association's Psychology Summer Institute. Dr. Arroyo's guidance was instrumental in the success of my career development award application at that time and five years later continues to be a devoted mentor with invaluable insights about my research endeavors. She encouraged me to join the NHSN and I was nominated by former ECLC Chair, Dr. Laura O'Dell. Two years ago, Dr. O'Dell encouraged me to become an active member of the ECLC, and I feel proud and fortunate to now take on a leadership role within the ECLC.

As we reflect on our experiences with the NHSN, we feel a strong sense of appreciation and responsibility to help other early career researchers discover the professional growth that can be jumpstarted by the networking and mentorship events created by the NHSN and the ECLC.

#### Looking Forward

As we look forward toward our two-year term, some key areas that we would like to focus on include: (1) increasing the number of graduate students and early career scientists in the NHSN, (2) promoting and creating new and exciting ECLC

networking and mentorship events, (3) developing methods to evaluate the reach and effectiveness of the ECLC, and (4) further formalizing the structure of the ECLC. Of course, participation and input from the entire early career membership, along with support from the NHSN Leadership, will be essential to achieve these endeavors. We have no doubt the next two years will be exciting and marked as a period of growth. Again, we are thankful to have this opportunity and serve as Co-Chairs of ECLC for the next two years.

Miguel Ángel Cano, PhD, MPH

Yessenia Castro, PhD

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#### The International Front

Deportation history among HIV-positive Latinos in two U.S.-Mexico border communities by Fátima A. Muñoz, Argentina E. Servin, Richard S. Garfein, Victoria D. Ojeda, Gudelia Rangel Gómez and María Luisa Zúñiga

For individuals living with HIV, deportation poses significant challenges to clinical disease management (e.g., medication adherence, care continuity) and may exacerbate healthcare disparities [1-2]. In the United States (U.S.), deportations have increased over the last five years; in 2012, an unprecedented 409,849 individuals were removed from the U.S. [3-5]. Half of the removals were for criminal charges, and the most common crime was illegal drug activity [6]. Latinos, primarily of Mexican origin, comprise 97% of U.S. deportees [7].



San Diego, California is adjacent to Tijuana, Baja California, and the two cities share one of the most frequently crossed borders in the world [5]. Tijuana is a major deportee-receiving city, with an influx of approximately 200 deportees on a daily basis [8]. California and Baja California also share the largest number of cumulative HIV/AIDS cases of all U.S.-Mexico Border States. In 2010, California reported 165,410 cases of HIV (367 per 100,000

population) and Baja California reported 6,718 cases (201 per 100,000 population) [9,10].



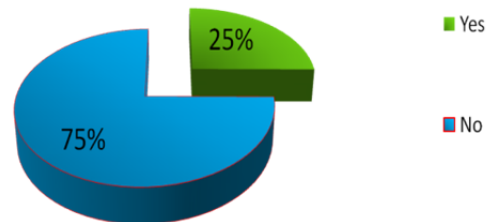
Circular migration and engagement in high-risk sexual and drug using practices between residents of San Diego and Tijuana may exacerbate the HIV epidemic in both cities and complicate service provision for the U.S. and Mexico [11]. Health risks associated with deportation among HIV-positive individuals may include discrimination, worsening of existing behavioral risks (e.g. unprotected sex, drug use), or introduction of new risks (e.g. survival sex work) [12,13].

This binational study identified factors associated with deportation history among HIV-positive Latinos living in two U.S.-Mexico border communities. From 2009-2010, we recruited a convenience sample from HIV clinics in San Diego, U.S. and Tijuana, Mexico. Eligible participants were  $\geq 18$  years of age, HIV-positive by self-report, of Mexican or Latin American origin, and residing in Tijuana or San Diego for  $\geq 1$  month in the prior year. The primary dependent variable was U.S. deportation history based on the question "Have you ever been deported from the U.S.?" (yes vs. no). We explored differences in sociodemographic characteristics, healthcare practices, risk behaviors, and HIV-related stigma by "U.S. deportation history".

Of 283 participants, 25% reported a prior deportation. Factors independently associated with increased odds of deportation history were being male (AOR:2.77; 95%CI:1.18-6.48), having <high-school education (AOR:3.87;95%CI:1.84-8.14), ever using cocaine (AOR:2.46; 95%CI:1.33-4.57), and reporting personalized HIV-stigma ("some have told me HIV is what I deserve for how I lived") (AOR:2.23; 95%CI:1.14-4.37). Lower self-reported

antiretroviral medication adherence (AOR:0.35; 95%CI: 0.12-0.96) and perceiving HIV-stigma ("most people believe a person who has HIV is dirty") (AOR:0.49; 95%CI: 0.25-0.94) were associated with decreased odds of deportation history.

Figure 1. HIV-positive Latino with U.S. Deportation History



Our study provides a critical step in the process of understanding that deportation is associated with specific socioeconomic and stigma-related indicators known to impact the health of individuals living with HIV. Given the increased number of U.S. detentions and deportations, including individuals living with HIV, greater attention is needed to improve binational coordination of care entry and engagement in Mexico. Current deportation policies and lack of resources do not favor the coordination of clinical care for individuals living with HIV and will undoubtedly have broader repercussions on the health of our shared U.S.-Mexico border populations.

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## New Member Interviews



Jeremy Goldbach, Ph.D.

Research Scientist Member

Dr. Jeremy Goldbach is an Assistant Professor in Social Work at the University of Southern California.

### **Why did you decide to join the NHSN?**

Nearly every academic mentor I have worked with is a member of NHSN and I have always found such great support from this group, it seemed only natural to seek membership!

### **When and why did you become interested in Hispanic health research?**

My interest began in graduate school while trying to understand the importance of considering cultural differences in prevention programming.

### **Briefly describe your current line of research (2-3 sentences).**

My research explores minority stress, multiple minority status (including racial/ethnic, gender, and sexual orientation), and behavioral health outcomes among adolescents.

### **What is your ultimate dream in terms of your career? Have you already accomplished this?**

I suppose wherever I end up will be where I was meant to be! I'm not sure how to answer this, but I know I haven't gotten there yet!

### **What is the most important lesson you learned as a graduate student?**

Take criticism seriously and know that your advisors have your best interests at heart!

### **What is the most important quality you look for in a mentor?**

Find a person who knows how to support you both inside and out of the academic sphere. Sometimes it takes a combination of people - but having someone who can both be your friend but also give you strong criticism in your work is important!



Miguel Cruz-Feliciano, MS

Graduate Student Member

Mr. Cruz-Feliciano is the Associate Director of the National Hispanic and Latino ATTC, unit of the Institute of Research, Education, and Services in Addiction of the Universidad Central del Caribe.

### **Why did you decide to join the NHSN?**

In 2005, one of my mentors, Dr. Rafaela Robles nominated me to participate in the Summer Research Training Institute on Hispanic Drug Abuse, sponsored by the National Hispanic Science Network conducted in Houston, TX. At that time, the learning experience and the guidance received helped me understand the need for Hispanic researchers to be trained and be involved in aspects addressing elements of disparities from the research, service, and educational perspectives. This event in combination with work experience motivated me to pursue a doctoral degree in public health, specialization epidemiology, which I am soon finishing on November, 2014. Now that I am almost ending this educational endeavor and thanks to the collaboration of Dr. Richard Cervantes, I am part of the National Hispanic Science Network where I anticipate to collaborate

and contribute to the increase in the body of knowledge and the application of scientific techniques to promote positive social change especially for Hispanic and Latino populations facing disparities in the area behavioral health treatment services.

**When and why did you become interested in Hispanic health research?**

Currently as associate director of the National Hispanic and Latino ATTC, unit of the Institute of Research, Education, and Services in Addiction of the Universidad Central del Caribe, I focus my efforts to the development of educational activities building the skills and capacity of the workforce serving Hispanic and Latino populations in need of substance abuse treatment and recovery support services across the United States. Also, as part of other responsibilities, I am working as senior evaluator for prevention and treatment services conducted by our Center of Evaluation for Program and Services and our Behavioral Community Clinical Center.

**Briefly describe your current line of research (2-3 sentences).**

The combination of diverse experiences in the field of substance abuse since 1999 and thanks to the Puerto Rico Drug Abuse Research Development Program funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, (NIDA) R24 DA013335, I was able to focus my line of research on "Stressful Life Events among Puerto Rican Substance Users and the Association with Substance Abuse Treatment". One of the contributions of this work is to explore substance use related stressors that influence treatment utilization among Puerto Rican substance users 18-35 years and recruited in community settings. The investigation presents the variable, number of stressors as a predictor for treatment utilization, even after controlling by confounders. The investigation evidence this is another key variable to consider at the time to develop outreach and engagement strategies for treatment utilization among Puerto Ricans. My goal is to continue expanding this area of research to find mechanisms that facilitate substance abuse treatment entry, engagement, and retention, so Hispanic and Latinos receive quality service considering their cultural background at the same time the client is

individually assessed to meet their unique needs as individuals.

**What is the most important lesson you learned as a graduate student?**

As a doctoral student I learn the research path seems lonely but if you look carefully you will find individuals as passionate as you and with similar interests that can make your life and your student career a lot much easier. Find a study buddy that you can count on and keeps you motivated, remember that your goal is to graduate not to change the world.

**What advice would you give to a fellow graduate student on how to handle stress?**

In terms of an advice, try to balance your studies, work obligations, and family. The key to success is to complement each important aspect of your life together and in sync. Stress is normal process the key is how to manage it. For that take time for yourself, engage in workout, play a video game, talk with someone, read something that you do not see as an obligation, or just hang out, you can meditate or just do nothing but invest time in you because if you do not do it nobody will do that for you. For example, I like reading manga just for fun or watching movies, but also do some work out regularly, it is important for you to eat right and keep healthy. After all, you deserve to enjoy the fruition of you effort with a high spirit and wellbeing.



Erin Sears, MPH

Graduate Student Member

Ms. Sears is a Professional Research Assistant at the Rocky Mountain Prevention Research Center at the University of Colorado Denver.

**Why did you decide to join the NHSN?**

I have been interested in connecting with other health professionals and organizations who share the same passion for decreasing health disparities and addressing social justice issues.

**When and why did you become interested in Hispanic health research?**

My interests in public health research had to be narrowed down to target populations and health issues of the biggest concern as well as most feasible to address. Hispanic health disparities are clearly present today and the level of desire and dedication I have seen in strong Hispanic communities, has proven that it is a very feasible goal to work with these communities to improve their health and the health of their families.

**Briefly describe your current line of research (2-3 sentences).**

My current line of research focuses mostly on examining the social determinants of health, the physical and built environment, food justice, urban agriculture, and designing and evaluating interventions addressing these factors to improve community health.

**What is your ultimate dream in terms of your career? Have you already accomplished this?**

My ultimate dream for further in my public health career is that I would like to design an impactful program plan that can be used and tailored by almost any community to improve the built environment by creating a feasible year round food hub and land space design that would promote healthy eating and active living.

**What is your cultural background and how did it influence your choice of career and/or research area?**

I was raised in the Baha'i Faith, which is a religion that promotes unity of all people and the acceptance and appreciation of human diversity. Given this foundation of the love for diversity early in my life, I believe set a course for embracing the health of all people in my career endeavors.

**What advice would you give to a fellow graduate student on how to handle stress?**

Find time to exercise, drink a glass of red wine at night, and listen to Sidney Bechet and Pete Johnson while studying.



Larry Davidson, Ph.D.

Research Scientist Member

Dr. Davidson is a Professor of Psychiatry and Director of the Program for Recovery and Community Health at Yale University.

**Why did you decide to join the NHSN?**

To be able to network and collaborate with other investigators interested in improving the behavioral health of persons of Hispanic origin.

**When and why did you become interested in Hispanic health research?**

When I mentored my first postdoc who was of Hispanic origin, and then went on to hire him onto the faculty to develop a research and training program in Hispanic behavioral health.

**Briefly describe your current line of research (2-3 sentences).**

Investigating processes of recovery in serious mental illnesses and addictions, and developing and evaluating innovative community-based interventions to promote recovery from these conditions, especially among ethnic/cultural minority populations.

**What is your ultimate dream in terms of your career? Have you already accomplished this?**

Yes, I am currently living my 'dream' career, directing a research, training, and consultation program at Yale's School of Medicine focused on recovery, social inclusion, and addressing health disparities.



**What is the most important quality you look for in a mentor?**

I look for mentors to be open to learning themselves, and to always have their mentees needs and growth first and foremost in terms of their priorities.

**What do you do for fun?**

My family and I gather in the kitchen to cook and eat.

Gira Ravelo, MA

Graduate Student Member

Ms. Ravelo is a Graduate Student at Florida International University's School of Public Health & Social Work.

**Why did you decide to join the NHSN?**

My desire to join the National Hispanic Science Network has to do primarily with being an up and coming Latina researcher with an interest in Latino substance use and health disparities. I felt it would be an excellent organization to join that would allow me to stay informed of studies, organizations, conferences, and opportunities that involved this population. Most of all, my interest is in the opportunity to meet other researchers that could serve as mentors and colleagues with similar research interest that would lead to future relationships and collaboration.

**When and why did you become interested in Hispanic health research?**

My path to research started with elder Latino case management and worked its way to genetic research in diseases associated with aging, such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease. Now, my commitment lies in health disparities among older Latinos, particularly HIV/AIDS related. As a Latina myself, I understand many of the barriers and cultural influences that promote health disparities among Latinos, including cultural norms that contribute to the risky sexual behaviors that may lead to HIV. In working as a research assistant, associate, and fellow, including in Community-Based Participatory Research (C-BPR), I have

witnessed the influence that research can have on a community and a population. These experiences have provided me with even greater certainty of my pursuit for research in Latino health disparities.

**Briefly describe your current line of research (2-3 sentences).**

Currently I serve as a Research Fellow at Florida International University's Center for US Latino Substance Abuse and HIV/AIDS (CRUSADA)/Center for Substance Abuse and HIV/AIDS Research on Latinos in the United States (C-SALUD) (CRUSADA/C-SALUD). C-SALUD is a P20 Center of Excellence funded by the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities. Between my time at CRUSADA as a Master Graduate Research Assistant and my PhD fellowship with CRUSADA/C-SALUD, I have spent a total of 5 years with the center at FIU. During this time, I have published articles, submitted and presented poster abstracts, contributed to grant writing, submitted and received score on an NIH F31 grant, as well as work on Community Based Participatory Research.

**What is your ultimate dream in terms of your career? Have you already accomplished this?**

My ultimate dream is conducting research or participating in the completion of research on Hispanic health disparities, particularly among older Hispanic populations.

**What is the most important lesson you learned as a graduate student?**

As a graduate student, the most important lesson I have learned is that relationships are everything. Which bring me back to my reasons for joining NHSN. To establish such networks for the good of long term relationships that may flourish into ongoing collaborations in the field of Hispanic health disparities. I believe it is only through these relationships that scientists can make the biggest difference, for in unity, there is strength.

**What is the most important quality you look for in a mentor?**

I believe the most important qualities a mentor can have is the unselfish desire for their protégé's success; to want the best for their protégé; to start them off with all the knowledge they have gained

thus far with the hope that they can carry the torch even further... complete and unselfish mentorship.



Eden Robles, MSW

Graduate Student Member

Ms. Robles is a Graduate Student and Research Assistant at the University of Texas at Austin.

**Why did you decide to join the NHSN?**

I joined NHSN because I wanted to be part of a network of research scientists that have similar interests as mine.

**When and why did you become interested in Hispanic health research?**

I became interested in Hispanic health research as an adolescent. I took part in a university linked program as a middle school student where one of the speakers addressed Hispanic health. I knew I wanted to pursue a career helping out la comunidad.

**Briefly describe your current line of research (2-3 sentences).**

I am interested in developing, and evaluation culturally adapted interventions for Hispanics. I have a particular research interest in substance use interventions for Hispanics.

**What is your ultimate dream in terms of your career? Have you already accomplished this?**

My ultimate dream is to identify the most effective practice behaviors for reducing substance use rates among Hispanics and to develop a research

informed curriculum for social work students seeking to work with the population. I would be part of a team of researchers that also share the same passion for helping out the community.

**What is the most important quality you look for in a mentor?**

The most important quality that I look for in a mentor is someone who is informative. I find it very helpful when I find a mentor that will talk to me about how to navigate through the system, and provide me helpful hints on how to advance my career.

**What is your cultural background and how did it influence your choice of career and/or research area?**

I am of Mexican American descent. My research area has been strongly influenced through my personal experiences. I have chosen to use my strength as a community insider, and researcher, to help address the pain and suffering of the community.

