Dear Friends:

Our community launched the Population Health Initiative four years ago with the goal of bringing our University and partners together in a more interdisciplinary and collaborative way to create a world where all people can live healthier and more fulfilling lives. Today, as the world battles the lethal spread of COVID-19, the importance of this undertaking has never been more clear or urgent.

Across the University of Washington, work is underway to develop treatments and preventive measures for COVID-19. Throughout our region, health-care professionals are heroically working to save the lives of infected patients, while public health experts lead prevention efforts and scientists model the pandemic’s possible impacts. Around the world, we are getting a crash course in the rapid spread of a novel virus and the cultural, economic and social changes that come with it.

These issues are encompassed within the broad vision of the initiative, which will receive a tremendous boost with the opening of the new Hans Rosling Center for Population Health on the Seattle campus in summer 2020. This building will act as a convening space for the full range of disciplines across the UW that are improving population health thanks to a transformative gift from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, as well as funds earmarked by the Washington state Legislature.

Significant progress has also been made to advance the key University programs, projects and partnerships needed to accelerate the initiative’s impact across a range of strategic and thematic areas. Four rounds of faculty pilot grants have been awarded, yielding promising results in areas ranging from pandemic disease preparedness to climate change adaptation. Awards were also made for three new population health faculty hires.

Student education and training programs reach more than 3,000 undergraduate and graduate students a year through courses, fellowships, a graduate certificate and award programs. New partnerships with government agencies, universities and nongovernmental organizations have emerged, with each of these collaborations offering new opportunities for our University to support on-the-ground implementation of best practices and to learn from our partners about local contexts and challenges.

As we move forward in an uncertain time, I remain inspired by the tremendous potential for impact that this initiative has the opportunity to realize. Yet the full realization of potential is possible only when we involve people across our institution and community who are drawn to this shared vision. In that spirit, I encourage you to continue to share with us your ideas and enthusiasm so we can collectively work to create a world of better health and well-being.

Sincerely,

Ana Mari Cauce
President
Professor of Psychology

ON THE COVER
The initiative supported the NatureCollections project, a mobile app that harnesses children’s enthusiasm for technology and their love of collecting things to encourage them to spend more time being active outdoors while exploring their natural environment.
WHAT IS POPULATION HEALTH?

Population health seeks to understand and improve all the factors that influence our health and well-being. This broad approach encompasses not only the elimination of diseases and injuries, but also the intersecting and overlapping factors that influence health.

Together, the three pillars of population health — human health, environmental resilience, and social and economic equity — affect the lives of billions of people around the world.

These pillars address many interrelated issues, including environmental exposures, policy and governance, poverty, racism, infrastructure, mobility, urban planning and more. Working holistically across these pillars ultimately influences health and well-being locally and globally.

WHAT DOES THE INITIATIVE ASPIRE TO ACHIEVE?

Our vision: The Population Health Initiative seeks to create a world where all people can live healthier and more fulfilling lives.

Our mission: The Population Health Initiative addresses the most persistent and emerging challenges in human health, environmental resilience and social and economic equity. In partnerships with local, national and global communities, we develop, implement and disseminate transformative knowledge through the UW’s research, service and teaching.

INITIATIVE LEADERSHIP

The Population Health Initiative is governed internally by a 30-member executive council responsible for developing, implementing and measuring progress toward the initiative’s goals. UW President Ana Mari Cauce chairs the council, which includes senior leaders, faculty, students and staff representing a range of contributing colleges, schools, programs and stakeholder units.

The initiative is in the process of recruiting a distinguished body of external advisors from a range of sectors and disciplines to provide strategic guidance. This board will be chaired by Bill Neukom, who is known for his decades-long leadership of Microsoft’s law and corporate affairs team and the American Bar Association, and for his success as CEO of the San Francisco Giants and founder/CEO of the World Justice Project.
WHERE ARE WE FOCUSING OUR EFFORTS?

The UW’s vision for improving population health is broad, involving contributions from all of the University’s schools and colleges in partnership with external collaborators. The role of the Population Health Initiative is to nurture and advance the key programs, projects and partnerships needed to accelerate the speed at which impact and progress can be realized.

The initiative’s focus is currently on the following strategic and thematic areas:

**Spurring interdisciplinary collaboration**

The initiative supports faculty, students and staff in engaging in interdisciplinary, collaborative work across the University and with external stakeholders. To that end, the initiative has developed mechanisms for funding, education, training, partnership building and more, to make it easier to collaborate across disciplines to improve population health.

**Addressing climate change and its human impacts**

Climate change is one of the most pressing challenges to population health that the world faces. The initiative has begun working with UW stakeholders to better understand the University’s collective expertise, and existing climate-change mitigation and adaptation activities, to identify opportunities to expand the UW’s collective impact.

**Furthering humanitarian assistance and disaster relief**

Hundreds of millions of people were affected by natural disasters over the last decade, with humanitarian crises forcibly displacing tens of millions more. The initiative is engaged in a range of efforts to support developing a more integrated University approach to education, research and service on these issues.

**Preventing violence and injury**

A range of expertise related to understanding, responding to and preventing violence and injury exists across the UW — but faculty, students and staff are not yet fully harnessing the breadth of the University’s capabilities in this space. The initiative is working with internal stakeholders to help raise the level of understanding of the University’s capacities, create new opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration and assist efforts to secure new funding for this area, which has traditionally been difficult to support.

**Cultivating social innovation and social entrepreneurship**

Social innovation and social entrepreneurship are emerging as important mechanisms by which population health interventions can reach communities that might most benefit from them. The initiative is helping to develop a more robust ecosystem for social innovation and entrepreneurship at the UW, supporting faculty and students in sustainably developing socially impactful innovations.
ACCELERATING NEW RESEARCH

A major focus of the Population Health Initiative is supporting interdisciplinary collaborations for developing innovative ideas. This support has occurred primarily through two approaches to date: funding population health pilot research grants and offering bridge funding for population health faculty hires.

Population health pilot research grants

The initiative offers pilot grants that encourage new interdisciplinary collaborations among faculty investigators for projects that address key population health challenges.

From 2016 to 2020, the initiative awarded 29 grants worth a total of $1.2 million. This funding was matched by an additional $1.5 million from other internal and external sources, more than doubling the total value of these awards to a collective $2.7 million.

Examples of project results to date include:

- Piloting a low-cost, self-sustaining model of a faith-based intervention that can address the psychological wounds of trauma and promote community reconciliation.
- Successfully testing a community-developed and -run program of prenatal and postnatal care to help reduce negative health outcomes for Somali women and infants in the Seattle area.
- Identifying nutritionally vulnerable U.S. West Coast communities that would benefit from improved fish access, and quantifying the extent of underutilized fish species in nearby fisheries.
- Documenting new empirical findings on psychiatric emergency services that informed clinical practice at one of the busiest emergency departments in the Pacific Northwest.

Several of the 29 projects have since been awarded follow-on funding from external grantors. A number of projects have also had their results documented in peer-reviewed and popular-press articles.

Population health faculty hires

The initiative awarded approximately $1.8 million in funding in 2018 for three new faculty positions focused on developing innovative solutions to major population health challenges. These awards, which were four-year “bridges” against future retirements, were selected through a competitive process that required proposal of a joint hire between two academic departments.

The three positions will focus respectively on local early-childhood interventions; global maternal, child and adolescent mental health; and the issues of health and environment in Arctic communities.

Two of the three roles have been filled, with the selected candidates beginning their positions in fall 2019.

Schools and colleges represented by research grant awards:

- College of Arts & Sciences
- College of Built Environments
- School of Dentistry
- College of Education
- College of Engineering
- College of the Environment
- Evans School of Public Policy & Governance
- Information School
- School of Interdisciplinary Arts & Sciences (Bothell)
- School of Law
- School of Medicine
- School of Nursing
- School of Nursing & Healthcare Leadership (Tacoma)
- School of Nursing & Health Studies (Bothell)
- School of Pharmacy
- School of Public Health
- School of Social Work
- School of Social Work & Criminal Justice (Tacoma)
- School of Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (Bothell)
EXPANDING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS

The Population Health Initiative offers several education and training opportunities to help advance the University of Washington’s vision for improving population health.

Undergraduate courses

The initiative seeks to raise awareness of the intersecting and overlapping factors that influence population health so that UW students understand the roles their disciplines can play in improving health and well-being. The initiative currently partners with Undergraduate Academic Affairs to offer courses that engage more than 3,000 undergraduates a year.

Applied Research Fellowship

The Population Health Applied Research Fellowship Program supports multidisciplinary teams of undergraduate and graduate students to work on real-world population health challenges. This program is run in partnership with the UW’s Center for Studies in Demography & Ecology. Fellows receive training in research skills and data collection, analysis, and presentation to deliver a work product that meets an external client’s needs.

The summer 2019 fellows worked with the Community Health Services Division of Public Health — Seattle & King County to analyze the disparities in birth outcomes between racial groups in King County, accounting for socioeconomic and population trends and investigating possible causes.

Social Entrepreneurship Fellowship

The initiative launched the Social Entrepreneurship Fellows Program in summer 2019 in partnership with the Buerk Center for Entrepreneurship, the Evans School of Public Policy & Governance, and CoMotion. The program’s goal is to expand opportunities for graduate students to gain real-world experience in social entrepreneurship, while giving UW investigators a road map to sustainability for population health–related innovations that lack a clear business model.

The three inaugural 2019 student projects were: a mobile app for serious mental illness, a social robot to reduce stress in high-school teens, and a framework to train communities to reduce risky behavior in youth. The fellows’ final reports offered the UW investigators a detailed analysis in customer discovery, markets, competitive landscapes and a final recommendation for a business model to move their projects forward.


Below, right: Social Entrepreneurship Fellows Cohort (from left): Elizabeth Esborn (Evans School), Saswata Dey (Foster School), Karissa Masciel (Social Work).
Graduate certificate in humanitarian response
The initiative partnered with the Graduate School to launch an interdisciplinary Graduate Certificate in International Humanitarian Response in 2019. The growing frequency, duration, impact and costs of natural and human-made disasters create a pressing need for a more broadly trained workforce of humanitarian professionals — a gap this certificate is intended to help fill.

The goal of this certificate is to provide a coherent body of study in which graduate and professional students from a variety of disciplines can better understand crisis prevention, mitigation, response and recovery — preparing them to help those affected by disasters (or living in disaster-prone areas) regain their “normal” ways of life. The four core courses for this certificate already existed at the UW but were each housed in a different school or college, demonstrating the initiative’s role in being able to help integrate existing work in a more interdisciplinary manner.

Undergraduate and graduate student awards
The Population Health Initiative awarded three rounds of Graduate Student Conference Travel Awards to 45 students. These awards further the academic, research or professional goals of graduate students as they strive to become the next generation of leaders in population health. These competitive awards were open to graduate students on all three UW campuses who had been accepted to present at a conference, symposium or other professional or academic meeting.

Similar travel awards were granted to 18 undergraduate students. In addition, 40 undergraduate students received Population Health Recognition Awards for their innovative and well-presented population health research at the Undergraduate Research Symposium in 2017, 2018 and 2019. Twelve students also received Population Health Recognition Awards for their compelling submissions to the 2017, 2018 and 2019 Library Research Awards for Undergraduates.

A UW research team installs a solar/battery nanogrid on the roof of a house in central Puerto Rico in March 2018.

“Attending the Society for Epidemiologic Research Annual Meeting — which I would have been unable to do without Population Health Initiative funding — was invaluable for my dissertation research and professional development.”
— Jerzy Eisenberg-Guyot
Ph.D. Candidate in Epidemiology

“The [American Society for Bioethics and Humanities] conference was an incredibly validating experience for an early-in-career researcher, and I wouldn’t have been able to attend without the Population Health Initiative travel grant.”
— Colleen Kimsey
Master of Public Health Candidate
BUILDING AND STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

The size of the UW can make it challenging for external parties to identify how best to engage the University when trying to solve inherently interdisciplinary challenges — especially when they don’t know which discipline has the answer or expertise they need.

The initiative acts as a front porch for these potential partners, serving as a single point of contact that can assess needs and then engage the appropriate University expertise to support developing the collaboration.

This approach allows locally, nationally and internationally based academic institutions, foundations and nongovernmental organizations, government entities, companies and others to easily and seamlessly explore and engage the full breadth of population health–related disciplines available at the UW.

Case Study: Public Health – Seattle & King County’s Community Health Services Division

The Population Health Initiative’s 2019 Applied Research Fellows spent 10 weeks during summer 2019 analyzing the impact of the First Steps program, which provides wraparound maternity and infant services for low-income pregnant women in King County. Their findings, which were presented to staff and leadership of the Community Health Services Division (CHSD) of Public Health — Seattle & King County, are helping to inform CHSD’s plans for redesigning and refining its delivery of prevention-based services.

Separately, the initiative also paired CHSD with a UW Doctor of Nursing Practice student to complete a project that evaluated how effectively evidence-informed Maternal Child Health (MCH) programs around the country address risk and protective factors associated with disparities in pregnancy and birth outcomes. The evaluation offered recommendations to PHSKC regarding which programs were the best fit for achieving their goals. PHSKC is using the results of this project to inform how to improve the delivery of their MCH services.

Below, left:
Claire Branley, an undergraduate Applied Research Fellow, explains her team’s findings to staff and leadership of the Community Health Services Division of Public Health – Seattle & King County.

Below, right:
UW President Ana Mari Cauce shakes hands with Aga Khan University President Firoz Rasul after signing the cooperative agreement in March 2019.
Case study: The Aga Khan University and Aga Khan Development Network

In March 2019, the UW signed a cooperative agreement with the Aga Khan University (AKU) — acting as the lead agency of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) — to codify population health partnership activities already underway and to leverage complementary strengths to further expand research, service and education in low- and middle-income countries.

Under the agreement, the UW is offering the AKU and AKDN technical advice and guidance in data science and implementation science, access to formal degree and training programs, and advice and support in transforming the AKU into a research-intensive university. The parties are also seeking to expand the number of joint research activities and student and faculty exchanges.

The AKU also currently offers six-to-eight-month international internships to UW undergraduate and graduate students. The first four UW interns joined AKU in the spring and fall of 2019 in the areas of finance, data science, global health and pathology.

In addition, a series of joint research grants and projects are underway between the AKU Medical College of East Africa and the UW. The projects are focused on strengthening HIV/AIDS training for Kenyan health-care workers, building AKU research administration capacity, and supporting human papillomavirus research training.

Case Study: Karolinska Institutet

The University of Washington signed a memorandum of understanding with the Karolinska Institutet (KI) in 2019 to deepen teaching and research collaboration in areas impacting population health. The five-year agreement details a range of possible collaborative projects and activities to explore, including faculty and student exchanges, joint research activities, and individual faculty partnerships.

This agreement came on the heels of a visit by a Karolinska Institutet delegation to the UW in November 2018. The delegation, led by KI President Ole Petter Ottersen, spent three days engaged in roundtable and small-group discussions with UW leadership and faculty to explore areas for possible population health collaboration.

From left: Prince Rahim Aga Khan, Princess Salwa Aga Khan, UW President Ana Mari Cauce, Aga Khan University President Firoz Rasul, UW Provost Mark Richards and Aga Khan University Provost Carl Amrhein pose after the signing of the cooperative agreement in March 2019.
OPENING THE CAMPUS HUB FOR POPULATION HEALTH

The new Hans Rosling Center for Population Health will open on the UW campus during summer 2020 after 2 1/2 years of construction.

The Rosling Center is designed to be the central hub for UW schools, colleges, departments, centers, researchers, students and staff from across the University to identify and work together with external partners on projects related to population health.

The building will also be home to the Department of Global Health, the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, portions of the School of Public Health and the Population Health Initiative.

The Hans Rosling Center for Population Health was made possible by a $210 million gift from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in October 2016 and $15 million in earmarked funding from the Washington State Legislature, as well as funding from the University.

About Hans Rosling

In October 2019, the name of Hans Rosling — a Swedish doctor, statistician, author and professor — became forever associated with the University of Washington’s transformative work in population health: The University’s Board of Regents named the $230 million building under construction on the UW’s Seattle campus the Hans Rosling Center for Population Health.

Rosling is known internationally for his captivating analysis of global health data, for discovering a paralyzing disease in Africa and explaining its socioeconomic causes, and for his intense curiosity and lifelong passion for educating students, world leaders and the public.

In 2006, Rosling burst onto the international stage with a widely acclaimed TED Talk titled “The Best Stats You’ve Ever Seen” that has been viewed more than 14 million times, showing innovative animated data visualizations developed by his son Ola Rosling and daughter-in-law, Anna Rosling Rönnlund. Hans Rosling followed that success with nine more TED Talks, speaking engagements around the world and the bestselling book “Factfulness: Ten Reasons We’re Wrong About the World — and Why Things Are Better Than You Think.” Published posthumously, “Factfulness” was coauthored with Ola and Anna.
LOOKING AHEAD

The Population Health Initiative has made significant progress on many fronts in its first four years, but much remains to be done. Our continued success in areas like the development of innovative new programs, projects and partnerships; recruiting faculty and students who flourish in interdisciplinary settings; and expanding promising areas of research requires the engagement and support of collaborators across our three UW campuses and of external partners.

Join us in our quest to create a world where all people can live healthier and more fulfilling lives. To keep up on the latest work of the initiative and find out how you can get involved, visit uw.edu/populationhealth.

“Hans Rosling was a visionary scholar who challenged the world to truly understand the health challenges we face, as well as the potential we have to overcome them. It was this unique combination of practicality and optimism that drove his work and inspired so many to action.

“I hope the faculty, students, staff and partners who come together in the building are equally inspired by Dr. Rosling’s legacy as they work to improve the well-being of people in Washington and around the world.”

— Ana Mari Cauce
UW President

Rosling Center — Construction work nears completion on the north end of the building’s main floor.
uw.edu/populationhealth