

ANNUAL COMMUNITY REPORT **2020**



**ADDRESSING CANCER  
TOGETHER DURING  
COVID-19:  
The ChicagoCHEC Partnership**

Join Our Cause through  
Education, Health Care,  
and Research



*Celebrating 5 years!*

## FIGHTING CANCER EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

The **Chicago Cancer Health Equity Collaborative (ChicagoCHEC)** is a network of researchers, faculty, students, and community members working together to reduce cancer rates and improve health outcomes for those most affected.

We recognize that Chicagoans who live in neighborhoods that are underserved or who are members of racial and ethnic minority groups are more likely to suffer from cancer and less likely to receive the care they need. We want to change that. Our goal is cancer health equity. **All Chicagoans should have access to the best available resources to prevent, diagnose, treat, and manage cancer and to live satisfying lives as cancer survivors.**

Since the inception of ChicagoCHEC in 2015, we have taken great strides in support of our mission. **These successes would not have been possible without the guidance, engagement and continued motivation from our community partners – the true foundation of our work.**

As we celebrate 5 years since ChicagoCHEC's formation, our commitment to design initiatives that expand community engagement, mobilize resources and build capacity remains strong! At the center of our partnership with Chicago's underserved communities, we continue to seek the guidance of our key community stakeholders in order to fully execute our mission. We aspire to foster and maintain respectful and meaningful collaborations with community partners to make a meaningful and sustainable impact in our communities.

In this 2020 report, we highlight a few of our key accomplishments across the three core areas of ChicagoCHEC: *community engagement, meaningful research, and training and education.*

We hope that you will join us for the next phase of our work!



# SNAPSHOT 2015-2019: ChicagoCHEC Milestones

An overview of community engagement, research, education and training events ChicagoCHEC has been part of from 2015-2019.

**2016-** 8 ChicagoCHEC Incubator & Catalyst Grants applications received for research partnership development proposals, reviewed by the Community Steering Committee, with **10 new community partners**. Launch of the ChicagoCHEC Research Fellows Program. **1st Annual ChicagoCHEC Community Forum: Keeping Cancer in CHEC: Bridging Communities through Education, Health Care, and Research** with **167** attendees. Published the first edition of the Annual ChicagoCHEC community report. ChicagoCHEC participates in **8 local community events** with **610** attendees.

**2018-** The ChicagoCHEC team assists with the Lung Force Expo and State Rep. Theresa Mah's 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Community Health Fair. Launch of **Community "CHEC-ins" conversations series** and held the first one with cancer survivors from Women on Top of Their Game Foundation (W.O.T.). **20** students participate in ChicagoCHEC Research Fellows Program. ChicagoCHEC conducts the **3<sup>rd</sup> Annual ChicagoCHEC Community Forum: Healing Together: From Surviving to Thriving "Our Lives After Cancer"** with **150** attendees. ChicagoCHEC participates in **27 local community events** with **4,975** attendees.

**2015-** Northeastern Illinois University, Northwestern University, and the University of Illinois at Chicago awarded **\$17.4 million** National Cancer Institute U54 collaborative grant to launch the **Chicago Cancer Health Equity Collaborative** (ChicagoCHEC).

**2017-** Launch of **Skinny Trees** podcast. Creation of the first ChicagoCHEC **Community Partner Resource Guide**. **19** students participate in ChicagoCHEC Research Fellows Program. ChicagoCHEC conducts the **2<sup>nd</sup> Annual ChicagoCHEC Community Forum: Community Counts: It Takes a Village to Defeat Cancer!** with **300** attendees. ChicagoCHEC participates in **25 local community events** with **3,360** attendees.

**2019-** ChicagoCHEC participates in **Cervical Health Month** and W.O.T. Foundation and Blue Hat Foundation's **"Truth Talking Tour: Women's Sexuality after Cancer"**. ChicagoCHEC staff attends the annual **IDPH** Illinois Cancer Partnership meeting. **Senator Durbin** meets with ChicagoCHEC Research Fellows. ChicagoCHEC conducts the **4<sup>th</sup> Annual ChicagoCHEC Community Forum: Navigating the Cancer Journey: With Resources for Early Detection to Survivorship** with **250** attendees. ChicagoCHEC participates in **33 local community events** with **5,335** attendees.

# SNAPSHOT: ChicagoCHEC in 2020

*An overview of community engagement, research, education and training events ChicagoCHEC has been part of in 2020.*

**FEBRUARY 2020** – ChicagoCHEC team recruits and receives over 200 applications for the ChicagoCHEC **Research Fellows Program**. A series of interactive Q&A workshops were held to help applicants.

**APRIL 2020** – ChicagoCHEC hosts virtual support group with **Tatisa C. Joiner Foundation & W.O.T. Foundation, Inc.** ChicagoCHEC launches its **Seminar Series** with a webinar on “Making a Greater Impact: How You Can Advocate for Health Policy Change Through Policy Briefs” delivered by **Dr. Joanna Buscemi**.

**JUNE 2020** – ChicagoCHEC hosts a **virtual community conversation** on *cancer screening and care during COVID-19* and 3<sup>rd</sup> virtual support group with **Tatisa C. Joiner Foundation & W.O.T. Foundation, Inc.** ChicagoCHEC participates in virtual **Puerto Rican People’s Parade**. **Senator Durbin** meets with ChicagoCHEC fellows to encourage them to pursue healthcare and science careers. **Dr. Rick McGee** hosts a webinar on “Seeking NIH Funding: Deconstructing the Alphabet Soup” for ChicagoCHEC’s seminar series.

**FALL 2020 & BEYOND** - The **5<sup>th</sup> Annual ChicagoCHEC Community Forum – Addressing Cancer Together during COVID-19**, takes place virtually.

**JANUARY 2020** – ChicagoCHEC team submits a funding application to the **National Cancer Institute** to continue its efforts for 5 more years. ChicagoCHEC hosts an informative talk with **Dr. Electra Paskett** on “A Multi-Level Model to Address Cervical Cancer Disparities to Appalachia”. ChicagoCHEC participates in NU’s **Winter Job & Internship Fair**.

**MARCH 2020** – ChicagoCHEC Research Project Leads, **Dr. Joanna Buscemi** and **Dr. Betina Yanez**, host a presentation on Culturally Adapted eHealth Intervention for Hispanic/Latinx Breast Cancer Patients.

**MAY 2020** – ChicagoCHEC launches **Virtual Community Conversations series** with a discussion on “*The Impact of COVID-19 on Communities Touched by Cancer.*” ChicagoCHEC hosts 2nd virtual support group with **Tatisa C. Joiner Foundation & W.O.T. Foundation, Inc.** Dr. Caryn E. Peterson hosts a webinar on “Crafting Your NIH Biosketch: Strengthening Your Biosketch To Better Highlight Goals and Achievements for Grants” during **ChicagoCHEC’s seminar series**.

**JULY & AUGUST 2020** – 24 students participate in ChicagoCHEC **Research Fellows Program**. ChicagoCHEC hosts **virtual community conversations** on *Cancer screening and care during COVID-19* for the Latinx community and the *Current Status of COVID-19: Staying safe in Phase 4 and Beyond*.



## A FEW WORDS FROM OUR LEADERS



***"Time goes fast, and five years ago when I attended the initial announcement of the NIH funding for the collaboration of Chicago institutions to focus on cancer equity, as a clinician and a respected community advocate, this presented an opportunity to serve, watch, participate and keep our leaders, researchers and academia in check –an opportunity as the late great John Lewis stated, was my opportunity for "Good trouble," meaning, if the community was not at the table, it would be concerning. To fast forward, job well done CHEC."*** - Joanne Glenn, ChicagoCHEC CSC Co-Chair and founder of the W.O.T. Foundation, Inc.

***"Cancer doesn't stop during COVID-19," "It keeps hiding, attacking, growing in our bodies. We have to keep up on cancer health for our mothers, fathers, children, tías, tíos y abuelos and arm ourselves with information and resources that speaks our languages and helps us fight cancer when it strikes."*** - Henrietta Barcelo, ChicagoCHEC CSC Co-Chair



***"Since its inception I have found the Community Forum has been a valuable tool for educating diverse populations that may not have been served before. It has provided culturally appropriate materials and given the attendees the opportunity to communicate and interact in a safe environment."*** - Rosemarie Rogers, ChicagoCHEC CSC Member

***"The annual ChicagoCHEC Community Forum is an incredible forum for on- the-ground sharing of those who have or had cancer and those who have been touched by cancer through their families and extended families."*** - Carmen Velasquez, ChicagoCHEC CSC member and founder of Alivio Medical Center



***"COVID-19 has ravaged our communities and has worsened all types of health inequities but especially those in cancer. This year, our annual Community Forum is going to tackle the intersection of inequities, cancer and COVID-19 in the hopes that we can help lift the needs of our communities and find on-the-ground solutions to respond."*** - Melissa Simon, MD, Co-Principal Investigator of ChicagoCHEC, George H. Gardner Professor of Clinical Gynecology of the Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center at Northwestern University

***"The cancer health disparities we see in Chicago stand as a clear call to action. Only by working together and through authentic engagement can we create meaningful change and reduce the unequal share of the cancer burden experienced by our underserved communities."*** - Marian Fitzgibbon, PhD, Co-Principal Investigator of ChicagoCHEC and Associate Director of Cancer Prevention and Control at the University of Illinois Cancer Center



***"ChicagoCHEC has made great strides in reducing cancer health inequities by creating new educational and research opportunities for students from across the City of Chicago."*** - Christina Ciecierski, PhD, Co-Principal Investigator of ChicagoCHEC and Professor of Economics at Northeastern Illinois University

***"Only through partnership and engagement with our City's underserved can we foster meaningful cancer research, education and training that appropriately addresses health equity issues. By serving the most diverse populations of students, NEIU is well-positioned to reach out to these communities and encourage them to actively participate and engage in this partnership."*** - Lidia Filus, Co-Principal Investigator of ChicagoCHEC and Professor and Chair of Mathematics of Northeastern Illinois University

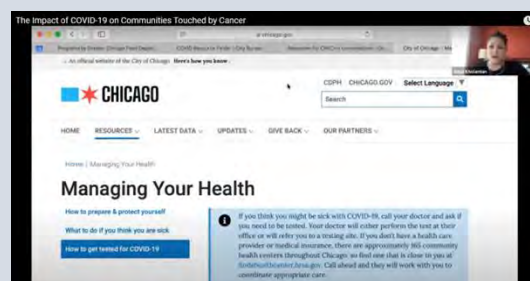
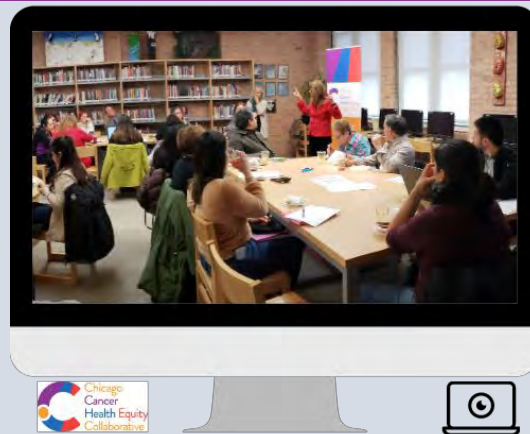


***"The work of ChicagoCHEC embodies Angela Davis' famous quote: 'I no longer accept the things I can't change and am changing the things I can't accept'."*** - Joseph Feinglass, PhD, Co-Principal Investigator of ChicagoCHEC and Research Professor of Medicine at Northwestern University

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: Community Conversations

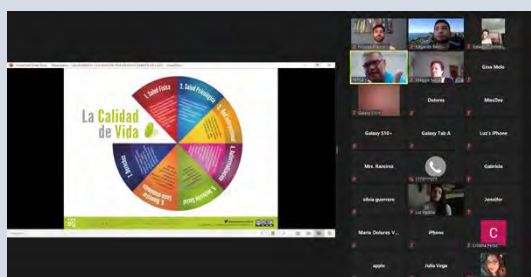
ChicagoCHEC is committed to working alongside communities to identify and address their cancer health needs. This year COVID-19 presented challenges to engage in in-person community gatherings and events, but together, we overcame this and continued our CHEC-in conversations from last year and modified them to meet the needs of the current circumstances.

**ChicagoCHEC's Virtual Community Conversations** provide an online platform for community members to speak about COVID-19 and cancer. Working with our Community Steering Committee, we identify topics and community members and invite them to meet with experts to answer questions and have a discussion about how the pandemic has impacted cancer patients. Our goal is to provide a safe space to learn from each other and share experiences with COVID-19 and cancer so that we better understand how, together, we can help improve cancer prevention and care. Below are a few conversations we had this year!



**Conversation on the Impact of COVID-19 on Communities Touched by Cancer:** featuring partnership investigators and staff, its goal was to provide an avenue to share experiences, challenges, and resources related to the COVID outbreak for community members touched by cancer. This conversation was held in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

**Conversation on Cancer Screening and Care during COVID-19 Pandemic:** featuring Dr. Lauren Green, MD, its goal was to provide a discussion and Q&A session on navigating cancer screening and care during the COVID-19 pandemic. Click [here](#) for the recording.



**Conversation on the Current Status of COVID-19: Staying safe in Phase 4 and Beyond:** featuring Dr. Melissa Simon, MD, MPH and Saul Ayala, Communicable Disease Supervisor, Chicago Department of Public Health. Its goal was to discuss with health experts on understanding and transitioning through the phases of COVID-19. Click [here](#) for the recording.



**SkinnyTrees: Lifting Health for All Podcast - Special Series: COVID-19 in Chicago Communities.** This spring, we launched a special series on the impact of COVID-19 in Chicago communities where we talked with experts and community members (featuring some of our own Community Steering Committee members and staff) about COVID-19 impacts across our communities. [Listen here.](#)



## RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS THROUGHOUT 2015-2020

We are committed to supporting cancer research with a health equity lens that integrates community organizations as equal partners in addressing research questions.

Since inception, ChicagoCHEC has funded **eleven** research teams through the **ChicagoCHEC Incubator, Catalyst Grant Program, and NCI supplement funding**. Such grants are intended to encourage collaborations among diverse teams of investigators (including students and trainees) across our three institutions. **They are also designed to be inclusive of community partners and organizations, therefore each research team consists of one or more community stakeholders as an integral member of the research team.**

### *ChicagoCHEC Incubator and Catalyst Pilot Projects:*

#### **ALAS-Wings**

*(Research Team: Mi Guía)*

#### **Illinois Tobacco Quitline**

*(Research Team: Choose to Change)*

#### **Near North Health**

*(Research Team: Choose to Change)*

#### **Access Living**

*(Research Team: WeCanConnect)*

#### **Project Brotherhood**

*(Research Team: Prostate Cancer Disparities & Citizen Scientists)*

#### **Puerto Rican Cultural Center**

*(Research Team: Obesity in Latino Men)*

**Mercy Hospital & Medical Center** *(Research Team: Breast Cancer Disparities)*

#### **MI GUÍA (MY GUIDE)**

Built an educational and support app to improve symptoms and quality of life during and after treatment among Hispanic Breast Cancer survivors.

#### **CHOOSE TO CHANGE STUDY**

Partnered with community health centers and the IL Tobacco Quitline to reduce tobacco use in Chicago.

#### **WECANCONNECT**

Used mHealth to connect physically disabled cancer patients with matched disabled survivors.

#### **PROSTATE CANCER DISPARITY IN CHICAGO-AREA AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN**

Developed cell models to improve tailored prostate cancer risk assessment & treatment among African American men.

#### **REDUCING OBESITY AMONG PUERTO RICAN & MEXICAN MEN**

Evaluated an obesity intervention program for Latino men to reduce obesity.

#### **ENGAGING CITIZEN SCIENTISTS TO COMBAT PROSTATE CANCER**

Trained citizen scientists to engage, partner, and participate in research to combat prostate cancer in African American men through screening.

#### **MOLECULAR APPROACHES TO BREAST CANCER**

Analyzed of breast tissue from African American women with respect to environmental exposure to examine disparities between African American and White women.

# COMMUNITY PARTNERS

We are committed to engaging, mobilizing, and supporting community capacity building efforts to improve health outcomes among Chicago's underserved communities. ChicagoCHEC's Community Steering Committee, a board of over 25 community leaders, guides the direction of ChicagoCHEC along with trained Community Health Educators (CHEs). Meet our Community Steering Committee and Leaders!

## OUR COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

**Henrietta Barcelo** (Co-Chair), INSTITUTO Health Sciences Career Academy & Instituto del Progreso Latino

**Joanne Glenn** (Co-Chair), W.O.T. Foundation Inc.

**Andie Baker & Eriika Etshokin**, Howard Brown Health

**Patricia Canessa**, Illinois Public Health Association

**Dolores Castañeda**, Community Activist

**Kristina Hamilton**, American Lung Association in Greater Chicago

**LauraJane Hyde**, Gilda's Club Chicago

**Jose López**, Puerto Rican Cultural Center

**Linda Rae Murray**, former Chief Medical Officer, Cook County Health & Hospital System

**Kirsten Peachey**, The Center for Faith and Community Health Transformation

**Jered Pruitt**, Chinese American Service League

**Fred Rachman**, Alliance Chicago Community Health Services, LLC

**Tom Wilson**, Former Community Organizer, AccessLiving

**RoseMarie Rogers**, Patient Advocate

**Joanna Rudnicka**, Amber Coalition, Polish-American Breast Cancer Program

**Berenice Tow**, Chicago Department of Public Health

**Amy Schwartz**, CSC Affiliate

**Esther Sciammarella**, Chicago Hispanic Health Coalition

**Carmen Velásquez**, Founder and former Executive Director of Alivio Medical Center

**Kyle Westbrook**, Partnership for College Completion



**Project Brotherhood**

[projectbrotherhood.net/](http://projectbrotherhood.net/)



[partnershipfcc.org/](http://partnershipfcc.org/)



[accessliving.org/](http://accessliving.org/)



[alas-wings.org/](http://alas-wings.org/)



**ALIVIO MEDICAL CENTER**  
*An Active Presence for a Strong Community*

[aliviomedicalcenter.org](http://aliviomedicalcenter.org)



[alliancechicago.org/](http://alliancechicago.org/)



**Amber Coalition**  
[ambercoalition.org/](http://ambercoalition.org/)



[lung.org/about-us/local-associations/illinois.html](http://lung.org/about-us/local-associations/illinois.html)



[faithhealthtransformation.org/](http://faithhealthtransformation.org/)



[nearnorthhealth.org/](http://nearnorthhealth.org/)



**Chicago Hispanic Health Coalition**  
[chicagohispanichealthcoalition.org/](http://chicagohispanichealthcoalition.org/)



**Chinese American Service League**  
[caslservice.org/](http://caslservice.org/)



[gildasclubchicago.org/](http://gildasclubchicago.org/)



[howardbrown.org/](http://howardbrown.org/)



[institutochicago.org/](http://institutochicago.org/)



[prcc-chgo.org](http://prcc-chgo.org)



[wellnesshouse.org](http://wellnesshouse.org)



[wotfoundation.com/](http://wotfoundation.com/)

**For more information on our community partners  
please check out our Community Resource Guide!**

**<https://chicagohec.org/resources/resource-guide/>**

# OUR FUTURE LEADERS

## 2020 ChicagoCHEC Research Fellows



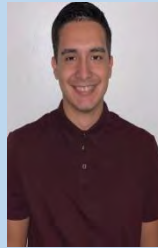
*Laura Bianco*



*Deborah Rodriguez*



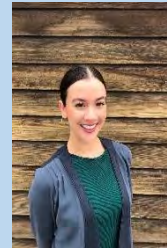
*Dionte Lindsey*



*Luis Arias*



*Raquel Gardner*



*Selena Roque*



*Carlos Lechuga*



*Oeinna Jackson*



*Jessica Yee*



*Magdelene Thebaud*



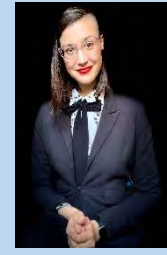
*Nadine Fields*



*Gabriella Moore*



*Matthew Uribe*



*Rebekah Monroe*



*Chidubem Ogbuefi*



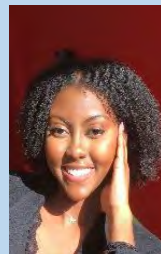
*Kalyn Whitehead*



*Mariama Bounds*



*Maxson Joseph*



*Neyani Reid*



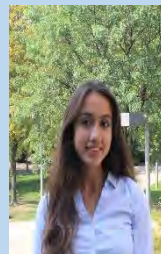
*Richies Tiv*



*Djeneba Diakite*



*Elsadig Abdalla*



*Karina Blanco*



*Jocelyn Ocampo*



*Everardo Tafolla*  
**Senior Fellow**



*Viviana Uribe*  
**Senior Fellow**



*Jacqueline Contreras*  
**Senior Fellow**



## 2020 ChicagoCHEC LEaP Fellows



*Tynetta Hill*



*Alivia Heuer*

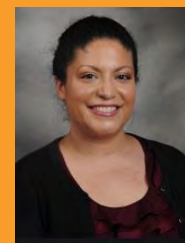


*Carmen Ward*

Former ChicagoCHEC Fellows are encouraged to apply to our post-fellowship program, Learning Experiences and Programs (ChicagoCHEC LEaP), which offers a more traditional one-on-one mentoring experience. Through LEaP, fellows are matched with a mentor and provided an immersion experience in cancer research.



*Oluwadamilola Oyaluade*



*Rut Ortiz*

Every summer, ChicagoCHEC hosts its Summer Fellows Program. This eight-week training program provides Chicago university students from underrepresented groups with the opportunity to learn about cancer health equity from doctors, researchers, professors, and community organizers. Our goal is to both inform and inspire these Fellows as the next generation of physicians and cancer researchers who will carry ChicagoCHEC's mission forward.

# CHICAGOCHEC IMPACT 2015-2020

Over the past five years, ChicagoCHEC has made great strides in advancing cancer health equity in Chicago through meaningful research, community engagement, and training & education.

Below are a few of our main accomplishments!

**Built a strong collaborative** that includes: an Administrative Core (AC), Planning & Evaluation Core (PEC), Community Engagement Core (CEC), Research Education Core (REC), Community Steering Committee (CSC), Internal Advisory Committee (IAC), and external Program Steering Committee (PSC).

**Established a diverse, city-wide, 24-member Community Steering Committee.** Members participated in research project selection, served as project co-investigators, supported student summer programming, guided community engagement efforts, organized annual community forums, and co-authored 6 peer-reviewed health policy publications with ChicagoCHEC faculty.

**Initiated the ChicagoCHEC Incubator & Catalyst Grants Program** with 9 completed cancer research projects involving 32 investigators 40% underrepresented minorities (URM) across the 3 institutions, 77 students (59% URM) & 12 community partners.

**Launched the ChicagoCHEC Fellows Program and Laboratory Experiences and Programs (LEaP)** totaling 89 students from NEIU, UIC, City Colleges of Chicago, and NU, all URM and/or first-generation college students.

**Engaged in over 100 community events in Chicago, reaching 14,000+ individuals** (23 sponsored by ChicagoCHEC). 54 events were conducted by Community Health Educators that were informed by the priorities of the NCI National Outreach Network (NON).

**Submitted 47 cancer relevant extramural grants & published 94 peer-reviewed publications** from ChicagoCHEC investigators. 24 new grant awards were direct outcomes of ChicagoCHEC-funded projects. An additional 94 cancer relevant manuscripts published in ChicagoCHEC related areas.

**Developed a cancer relevant curriculum at NEIU**, including the launch of the Master of Public Health Program with a concentration in Cancer Health Disparities.

**Promotion of ChicagoCHEC's underrepresented faculty** and faculty conducting cancer disparities research, including 11 at NEIU, 3 at NU, 3 at UIC, and an endowed chair/professorship.

# YOUR VOICE, YOUR COMMUNITY, YOUR HEALTH

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

### Stay Involved with ChicagoCHEC

The ChicagoCHEC website is jam-packed with information and resources, along with information on the many ChicagoCHEC-sponsored community events throughout the city. Visit [www.chicagochec.org](http://www.chicagochec.org) for more information.

### Be a Partner with ChicagoCHEC

We want to hear from you and your community organizations! We work with organizations like yours by collaborating to provide education and outreach events, training opportunities, and other cancer health initiatives. Help us tailor programming to meet the needs of your community.

### Be a Connector

Network with other organizations, listen to the voices of residents, and serve as a connector for resources and linkages to reduce health disparities!

### Help us Empower Our Future

Are you or your organization working with underrepresented minorities who are interested in science and medicine? Link them to ChicagoCHEC! We have an annual CHEC Fellows Program and more! We have opportunities for undergraduate and post-baccalaureate students.



NEIU President, Gloria Gibson, gives remarks at the ChicagoCHEC Community Forum.



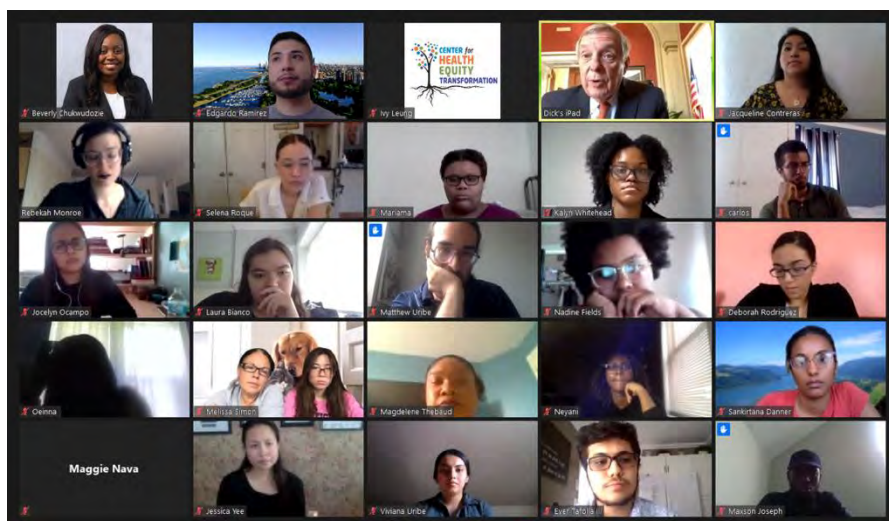
Community Resource Fair at the ChicagoCHEC Community Forum.



Joanne Glenn, CSC Co-chair moderates a panel discussion at the ChicagoCHEC Community Forum.



CHEC-in community conversation at Instituto del Progreso Latino.



ChicagoCHEC Summer Fellows met with Senator Dick Durbin to discuss the importance of pursuing health equity research careers.

## ChicagoCHEC Leadership



Melissa Simon, MD, MPH  
Robert H. Lurie  
Comprehensive Cancer  
Center of Northwestern  
University



John Stewart IV, MD, MBA  
University of Illinois Cancer  
Center Chicago



Marian Fitzgibbon, PhD  
University of Illinois Chicago



Christina Ciecierski, PhD  
Northeastern Illinois  
University



Lidia Filus, PhD  
Northeastern Illinois  
University



Joseph Feinglass, PhD  
Northwestern University

We are indebted to our community leaders and partners, faculty members, research and administrative staff, and students/trainees for their engaged participation and continued support.

**Thank you for being with us throughout the past 5 years. We look forward to serving our community in more years to come!**

Funding support for ChicagoCHEC is provided by the National Cancer Institute (grants U54CA202995, U54CA202997, and U54CA203000).

The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health.

We welcome questions and comments from our readers. Please direct correspondence to [info@chicagochechec.org](mailto:info@chicagochechec.org).

Further information can be found at <http://chicagochechec.org/>

Twitter: @ChicagoChec

Facebook: ChicagoCHEC

Instagram: @teamchicagochechec

YouTube: Chicago CHEC

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