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Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Launches New Leadership Program: 30 Health Care Professionals From Many Fields Collaborate to Build Culture of Health

(CHAPEL HILL, N.C.)—Improving health and reducing persistent disparities in wellness and longevity across the United States requires clinical innovation and community transformation. A new national leadership program has just selected its first cohort of fellows who will advance both.

Clinical Scholars, a national leadership program, kicks off this fall with 30 innovative clinicians from many fields and specialties who will collaborate to tackle pressing health problems from every angle. Led by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), *Clinical Scholars* prepares health care providers and practitioners to expand their influence beyond the hospital or clinic to advance a Culture of Health—one that places well-being at the center of every aspect of life.

“Health care providers got into this business to make people’s lives better. We know we can’t do that just by working in the clinic or hospital, and we can’t do it alone,” says Dr. Giselle Corbie-Smith, *Clinical Scholars* co-director and Kenan Distinguished Professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Director of the UNC Center of Health Equity Research. “This program lets providers stretch beyond their specialty or daily work setting, thinking together about how to attack ‘wicked’ health problems by drawing from every clinical practice and engaging with their community.”

Hailing from Los Angeles, Calif., to Oneonta, N.Y., the first cohort of fellows represent a diverse range of disciplines, including nursing, audiology, pharmacy, and social work. Through the program, they will receive funding to work in cross-functional teams on projects that address top-of-mind issues in health and equity, including addiction, community violence, transgender health, poor oral health in rural areas, behavioral health in immigrant communities, and integrative mental health.

Along the way they are developing high-level leadership skills through professional coaching, mentoring, networking and an advanced curriculum. “We have a lot of excitement and confidence in our approach, since our previous work indicates that professionals build leadership skills and use those skills to a significantly greater extent after this type of training. We look forward to this opportunity to create a transformational experience for the clinicians who will engage in this new Robert Wood Johnson Foundation program to serve the public good,” says Dr. Claudia Fernandez, a *Clinical Scholars* co-director and Clinical Assistant Professor and leadership institute director at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Selected through a competitive process that drew many applications, participants receive a stipend to support their participation and their projects. They will continue working full-time in their home communities and apply their new knowledge and leadership in their careers.



Additional partners providing training and coaching to leaders include: AcademyHealth, Community Campus Partnerships for Health, and University of Nebraska Medical Center.

The 2017 application period will open in January. The full list of *Clinical Scholars* is available at www.clinical-scholars.org

Clinical Scholars is one of four new leadership development programs launched this year by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The three additional programs, all with an emphasis on cross-sector collaboration and equity, include:

[Culture of Health Leaders](#) supports leaders—from all sectors that have an influence on people’s health—to create collaborative solutions that address health inequities and move their communities and organizations toward a Culture of Health.

[Health Policy Research Scholars](#) builds equity by investing in scholars from underrepresented populations or disadvantaged backgrounds in graduate programs whose research, connections, and leadership will inform and influence policy toward a Culture of Health.

[Interdisciplinary Research Leaders](#) equips teams of researchers and on-the-ground change agents with advanced leadership skills and a clear focus on health and equity, allowing them to apply health research and policy to meet the pressing needs of communities.

Each program will provide training in topics from change leadership to health policy; mentoring and executive coaching; networking with other program participants; and the opportunity to work on solutions to real, complex problems in local communities. Participants gather in-person several times each year, and work together weekly via webinar, distance learning and online collaboration.

These programs represent a new four-year, multimillion dollar investment by RWJF, and one that continues a long legacy of supporting the development and diversity of leaders. Initially focusing on health and health care, the programs have expanded in the past year, recognizing that building a Culture of Health requires the attention and contributions of a wide range of individuals in every field. Five additional leadership programs, grounded in health and health care but also increasingly focused on collaboration across sectors and disciplines, are continuing as well: [Harold Amos Medical Faculty Development Program](#), [New Connections](#), [RWJF Health Policy Fellows](#), [Summer Health Professions Education Program](#), and [State Health Leadership Initiative](#).

About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

For more than 40 years the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has worked to improve health and health care. It is working with others to build a national Culture of Health, enabling everyone in America to live longer, healthier lives. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org. Follow the Foundation on Twitter at www.rwjf.org/twitter or on Facebook at www.rwjf.org/facebook.

