WE MAKE LIVES BETTER
UT HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER®
SAN ANTONIO

**UTHealth San Antonio
Executive Summary**

The Population Health Strategic Plan for UT Health San Antonio aims to address the health and well-being of residents in our 38-county catchment area which was defined based on our initial 38-county coverage mandate from the Texas Legislature as a part of 1989's South Texas Border Health Initiative. In addition to this mandate, UT Health San Antonio has strong ties to these counties as they are served by our five Area Health Education Center (AHEC) and they have extensive research, clinical and educational programs directed by the Center for Research to Advance Community Health (ReACH), the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR), the UT Health San Antonio MD Anderson Cancer Center and others institutional groups who serve this region. As the largest comprehensive health sciences university in South Texas, we have a long history of initiatives that focus on addressing population health challenges of this culturally rich, but economically disadvantaged region.

Using national and statewide data from surveys, registries, the U.S. Census Bureau, and IHPR's South Texas Health Status Review we highlighted the specific demographics, health behaviors, health outcomes (morbidity and mortality) and health disparities in our 38-county South Texas region compared to the nation and the rest of Texas. Overall, socioeconomic status measures, indicators of health care access, and data on unhealthy behaviors reinforce the need to systematically address the significant health and health care challenges confronting our catchment area. Although currently mortality rates from two major causes of death nationally—heart disease and cancer—are lower for this region, the health of our racial/ethnic residents will be increasingly and disproportionately compromised by diseases related to negative health behaviors, such as sedentary lifestyle and obesity. Clear consequences of lifestyle risks are seen in the higher prevalence of diabetes and chronic liver disease in our South Texas region compared with Texas and the rest of the U.S. Moreover, ratings from RWJF regarding years of potential life lost for our counties point to greater morbidity in this region than for the rest of the state. These nonspecific indicators of morbidity may reflect health challenges for which prevalence data are not available by county, such as mental health conditions and chronic non-cancer pain. These health threats are heightened by poor access to health care as over 90% of this region has been designated by federal agencies as medically underserved.

Our team also obtained primary data from community focus groups throughout our catchment area to solicit real-time community health priorities. Community members participating in these focus groups consistently expressed the need to address the gaps in our health care services and accessibility as well as creating a healthier environment through exercise facilities, access to healthier foods, and education about integrating these resources into daily lifestyle. Diabetes was highlighted as a threat to the community and can serve as a useful model for chronic disease management initiatives because it requires substantial personal self-management and involvement of family/social support. Our community focus groups generally support behavioral health interventions along

with innovative health care delivery solutions supplemented by educational outreach programs.

Our strategic plan focuses first on establishing the infrastructure required to success-fully conduct population health research and small projects that could constitute proof of concept in addressing the population health priorities in our South Texas catchment area. This infrastructure, or Collaboratory, is an inter-professional and multi-disciplinary center without walls with expertise in biostatistics, clinical informatics, epidemiology, health services research, quality improvement, health promotion research, dissemination and implementation science, health economics/decision science and community part-nered research. This infrastructure draw upon diverse expertise within our institution and community/university partners outside our institution.

We aim to complete six short term priorities and activities in one to three years.

- A primary aim is to build workforce capacity in population health sciences. In order to have a successful population health program we need to build the capacity and increase our workforce of young investigators conducting research focusing on health priorities of the communities in out catchment area. To do so we will develop a men-tored training program that connects trainees and mentors who then develop propos-als that address innovative projects that address health priority topics identified by the communities in our catchment area and the UT System. This will aid us in developing a learning collaborative led by established investigators conducting population health research to mentor young investigators and will yield specific products such as publi-cations, presentations and collaborations that can provide the foundations for larger scale projects that help to address population health priorities in our catchment area.

- We will design and execute didactic yet compelling multimedia programming that focuses on community health issues relevant to our catchment area with the goal of increasing health literacy in our catchment area. We will use multiple media such as print, radio, television and digital media aimed at general and Latino audiences to disseminate information. This will allow us to create a powerful, culturally infused, scientific theory-based multimedia campaign that utilizes real community role models and/or programs to model healthy behaviors – to generate behavioral change towards healthy lifestyles.

- To help address priority deficiencies both within health care settings and in commu-nities within our catchment area we plan to engage trainees and graduate Community Health Workers (CHWs) in educational programs and onsite practicums. This will be a workforce to learn and provide culturally appropriate education, navigation services and other support for high priority conditions in our region. This training program will reflect evidence-based practices and research conducted by our team that have been demonstrated to yield measureable benefits for our community. We will offer practi-cum opportunities at collaborating clinics that serve low-income, vulnerable popula-tions in this region.

- Using GfK's Knowledge Panel® we plan to develop a population-based survey of adult residents in our catchment area to gain information about health behaviors, health risks and daily life that will give us data regarding barriers and facilitators to specific health outcomes that are selected by the community and researchers that is needed to guide the development of programs and interventions. Longitudinal surveys of this

panel will provide an opportunity to evaluate the impact of programs and changes in participant perceptions of need over time.

· To ensure that all student who graduate or attend our intuition will be exposed to key aspects of population health before they embark on their careers in the health care field we plan to form an institutional working group that will be charged with ensuring the population health topics are integrated into curricula across the institution.

· UT Health San Antonio plans to analyze diverse county, state and national data sources to develop and publish an update to the most recent IHPR South Texas Health Status Review. This undertaking will inform the strategic plan's identified priorities and our understanding of existing and shifting health disparities affecting our catchment area.