



Vision Statement

THE CHALLENGE: Effective initiative to advance the health of populations is dependent on scientific insights that account in an integrative fashion for the multiple factors that interact to shape health, disease, and disability—ranging from the biologic and environmental to the social and behavioral, and the profile of interventions to address them. It requires scientists from different disciplinary backgrounds to combine their knowledge and expertise to answer questions that no one alone can answer – for example, questions about the causes of health disparities, the mechanisms through which toxic stress produces disease, and the reasons why specific policies work or fail to improve health. In a world where research organizations, academic institutions and career pathways remain tied to disciplines and knowledge remains fragmented and locked within disciplinary journals, integrating disciplinary contributions to population health science is a challenge. Currently, there is little shared professional space for population health scientists from multiple disciplines to come together as a unified community. A robust and sustained venue for sharing knowledge across traditional disciplinary boundaries is critical to foster collaboration among scientists, create new scientific knowledge, and strengthen the foundation for effective population health policies and action.

THE OPPORTUNITY: Population health science is a rapidly expanding and diverse field of inquiry that harnesses the combined power of multiple disciplinary tools in an integrative fashion to answer complex questions and find and test practical approaches to population health improvement. Rigorous population health science produces deeper and richer insights about the societal, behavioral, and biological causes of health and disease and the mechanisms producing health disparities. It also provides the evidence base for policies and practices that promote health, prevent disease, enable access to quality care and enhance the treatment of disease. An interdisciplinary professional association that links population health scientists together provides the opportunity to strengthen the knowledge needed to improve population health in the nation and throughout the world.

THE VISION: The Interdisciplinary Association for Population Health Science (IAPHS) will provide supportive common ground for scientists working at these frontiers to quicken the pace of progress. It will provide an interdisciplinary professional space that *connects* and *capitalizes* on the diversity of researchers who have the knowledge needed to produce high-impact, cutting edge, multidisciplinary population health science. The organization will provide opportunities for researchers from different perspectives to share scientific results, advance methodologies, debate critical issues in population health science and form new collaborations. The organization will also develop activities and partnerships that foster the exchange of knowledge between population health scientists and the end-users of science in the world of policy and practice. IAPHS will build effective communication platforms and best practices for knowledge dissemination in order to facilitate the translation of research to efforts to improve population health and eliminate health disparities.



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ACTIVITIES: IAPHS will advance its mission by:

- Fostering ties among scientists with topic- and disciplinary-specific expertise who can work together to solve complex population health problems involving multiple systems;
- Providing opportunities for these scientists to connect with stakeholders, decision-makers and practitioners to encourage knowledge exchange that can improve both research and evidence-based strategies for population health improvement; and
- Increasing the visibility of population health science by communicating advances in scientific knowledge to multiple audiences and promoting the importance of population health research.

IAPHS will initially focus on populating a contact database of scientists active in the field, establishing a networked communication vehicle to identify synergies and foster collaboration, developing a website to share relevant research insights and opportunities, and convening an annual conference and topic-specific meetings to highlight outstanding interdisciplinary population health science and promote knowledge exchange. Related activities envisioned for the organization include:

- Creating communications platforms (e.g., social media, webinars) that facilitate exchange among researchers from different institutions and disciplines and between researchers, policy-makers and practitioners.
- Producing population health research products such as special issues of academic journals, monographs, research briefs and research-in-action briefs, and potentially a journal or an annual review of population health science.
- Sponsoring population health research training activities through workshops and other activities that support professional development.
- Developing awards to recognize early career scholars, high impact research and innovative research in action projects.

The IAPHS will need to create and maintain a stable revenue stream to support the objectives described above. This revenue stream will be developed through “springboard fundraising efforts” by recruiting the involvement of individuals, organizations, and agencies with stakes in the progress of population health science, securing grants and a tiered membership structure that accounts for differential resources potential members may have to join professional organizations.

BUILDING FROM A STRONG BASE: The number of scientists committed to improving population health through rigorous interdisciplinary science has grown rapidly in recent years. The field has benefited from a wide variety of initiatives – from new directions in training programs within schools of public health, medicine, public policy and the social sciences; initiatives supported by the National Institutes of Health such as the Centers for Population Health and Health Disparities; and human capital programs supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. It is now time to create a national infrastructure that solidifies, supports and institutionalizes this growing network of scientists. The creation of the Interdisciplinary Alliance for Population Health Science will support the development of interdisciplinary population health science and a rigorous evidence base for improving population health.