



# Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Scholars in Health Policy Research

## An RWJF national program

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) established the *Scholars in Health Policy Research* program in 1991 to produce the next generation of creative thinkers and problem solvers in health policy by attracting talented new economists, political scientists, and sociologists to the field of health policy research.

Under the program, recent graduates of doctoral programs in the three disciplines receive stipends to study and conduct research for two years at Harvard University, the University of California at Berkeley/San Francisco, or the University of Michigan.

The program has produced 200 Scholars to date. Most of them hold academic positions and virtually all of them are still engaged in health policy research. More than two dozen have served on scientific advisory panels or been appointed to key policy-making positions at federal agencies.

Alan B. Cohen, ScD, professor of health policy and management at Boston University and director of its Health Policy Institute, has directed the program since its inception.

Total authorizations by the RWJF Board of Trustees from inception in 1991 through April 2015 are \$ 84.1 million.

## CONTEXT

Public interest in health policy has intensified dramatically in recent decades as concerns about the nation's health and the health care system have grown. Health care debates today are as likely to be concerned with defining the best health policies as they are with providing the best health care services.

Compared with other industrialized nations, the United States continues to perform poorly on numerous indicators of health status, while health care expenditures rise each year and large numbers of Americans either lack health insurance or have insufficient coverage.

The systems that provide health care in the United States are rapidly changing and consolidating as they attempt to respond to rising costs, competitive pressures, and an

aging population. Changes are likely to accelerate as these systems fully implement the Affordable Care Act of 2010 (ACA). Even with well-implemented system reforms, large problems still face the nation—some with deep economic, political, and social roots. These include childhood obesity, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, depression, crime, poverty, racism and violence, which burden the health care system and public health agencies with challenges that lie beyond their traditional missions.

Breakthroughs in medical science and technology have prompted enormous improvements in the country's capacity to treat illness. But as the nation struggles with how best to assure access, quality, equity, and efficiency in health care, policy-makers and others turn to the field of health policy research for guidance and direction.

As the health sector has grown in size and complexity, so too has the need for health policy research that informs and advances policies to improve the health and health care of people. As researchers and practitioners better understand the array of personal and environmental factors that bear on health status, they have come to realize that the most pressing health problems cannot be solved from within the health field alone.

### **Shortage of Creative Thinkers**

Knowledgeable observers generally agree that the relatively young field of health policy research suffers from a shortage of creative thinkers and policy analysts and that it has historically had only a limited ability to attract bright, young social scientists.

Investigators from the disciplines of economics, political science, and sociology use conceptual frameworks that are central to understanding health and health care. The interplay among experts in these fields, when brought to bear on any single issue, can result in a rich multidisciplinary perspective that enhances the way issues are framed and addressed.

Despite this apparent match, social science scholars have found it difficult to pursue health policy research because they lack training opportunities and because reward structures within their disciplines guide them toward other fields. Therefore, they end up pursuing research that falls squarely within their disciplines rather than pursuing topics that require interdisciplinary research, such as health policy.

### **RWJF Interest in the Issue**

Since its inception as a national philanthropy in 1972, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) has supported health policy research and has sought to build the capacity of the field. Initially, however, its major efforts focused on health professionals, rather than on social scientists.

- The *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Clinical Scholars Program*, RWJF's oldest national program, provides young physicians with two to three years of graduate-level study and research to acquire new skills and training in the nonbiological sciences important to improving health and health care. See also [Program Results](#) on the *Clinical Scholars Program*.
- The *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health Policy Fellows* program introduces mid-career health professionals to federal policy-making. See also [Program Results](#) on *Health Policy Fellows*.

RWJF's early support for social scientists was far more modest. For example:

- In 1973, it funded a health policy research and teaching center—now known as the Philip R. Lee Institute for Health Policy Studies—at the University of California, San Francisco.<sup>1</sup>
- It funded a fellowship program in health economics at Harvard University<sup>2</sup> that had a difficult time recruiting participants, but turned out some of the leading figures in health economics, including:
  - Harold S. Luft, PhD, director of the Palo Alto Medical Foundation's Research Institute and Caldwell B. Esselstyn Professor emeritus of health policy and health economics
  - Frank Sloan, PhD, J. Alexander McMahon Professor of health policy at Duke University Medical Center
  - Paul Ginsburg, PhD, president of the Center for Studying Health System Change in Washington
  - William D. White, PhD, professor of policy analysis and management and director of the Sloan Program in Health Administration at Cornell University
- RWJF also began to support the health policy research of three established social scientists: Victor Fuchs, PhD; David Mechanic, PhD; and Eli Ginzberg, PhD.

RWJF's first national program aimed at building health policy research capacity in the social sciences, the *Faculty Fellowships in Health Care Finance* program, provided 40 Fellows with training and research funding in health care finance between 1984 and 1992.

An evaluation of the *Faculty Fellowships* program found little agreement about the purpose of the program, the type of Fellow it should target, or the kind of training it should offer those Fellows. RWJF also concluded that its support of specific individual social scientists in the *Faculty Fellowships* program was too narrowly focused.

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<sup>1</sup> ID#s 000004, 000308, and 002455.

<sup>2</sup> ID# 000239.

In 1991, at the same time the Foundation authorized the *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Scholars in Health Policy Research* program, it also established the *Investigator Awards in Health Policy Research* program to support research projects by a wider variety of investigators in an array of disciplines. See [Program Results](#) for more information on the *Investigator Awards* program. Through the *Scholars* program, RWJF sought a new approach to attracting and training younger social scientists in health policy research.

## THE PROGRAM

The first group entered *Scholars in Health Policy Research* in 1994. Since the original authorization in 1991, the Trustees have renewed the program six times with total authorizations of \$ 84.1 million through April 2015.

The overarching goal of the program is to produce the next generation of creative thinkers and problem solvers in health policy by attracting talented recent graduates of doctoral programs in economics, political science, and sociology to the field of health policy research.

### Program Design

The program aims to achieve this goal by immersing these Scholars in health policy research and exposing them to the thinking of each other's social science disciplines. Three assumptions underlie the *Scholars* program:

- Health issues and the health care system have grown increasingly complex over time.
- Health policy research needs to be more effective in addressing these complexities.
- In order for health policy research to be more effective, it must attract talented new social scientists who will examine the health policy arena through the lens of their individual disciplines as well as from the perspectives of their collective disciplines.

RWJF decided to focus the program on economists, political scientists, and sociologists because scholars from these disciplines bring particularly important but sometimes overlooked perspectives to health policy:

- **Economists** can examine the cognitive factors that influence the health care decisions of individuals and organizations and the behavioral effects of those decisions. They can study the economic burden of disease on different populations caused by disparities in access to care.

Economists can analyze the implications and effects of different tax policies on the health and well-being of populations and individuals. They can assess the effects of continued growth in health spending on public budgets or other sectors of the economy.

- **Political scientists** can furnish new insight into the politics of health care:
  - How legislative battles are framed and fought
  - How public opinion shapes policy formulation
  - How interest groups and the media exert influence over health policy decisions
  - How the balance of power among major players may shift as a result of changing policies
  - How communities might be empowered and mobilized to address health problems
- **Sociologists** can deepen the collective understanding of how the health care system is structured and organized. They also can assess the impact of changing roles and functions of health care providers. Sociologists can provide a framework for understanding how social movements affect the nation's health. They can expand knowledge of the socioeconomic and cultural determinants of health. Sociologists also study the role of social networks in improving health care decision-making through information exchange and patient empowerment.

Under the program, recent graduates of doctoral programs in the three disciplines spend two years at one of three leading universities: Harvard University, University of California at Berkeley/San Francisco, and the University of Michigan. As of 2012, the program selects up to nine Scholars each year, placing three at each university.

In general, each cohort of Scholars at each school includes representation from all three social science disciplines. At any one time there are about six active Scholars at each site, three in their first year of the program and three in their second year. During their two-year stint, these Scholars:

- Learn about health and health care, the structure and function of the health care system, and the health policy-making process
- Participate in a learning environment that exposes them to the perspectives and methods of other social science disciplines, as well as medicine and public health
- Conduct relevant research and analysis under the guidance of and in collaboration with distinguished faculty mentors

## **Program Management**

### ***National Program Office***

A national program office at Boston University School of Management provides administrative and policy oversight for the program as follows:

- Designs and manages the application and selection process for Scholars

- Plans and conducts the program's annual meeting
- Produces a Working Paper series to disseminate draft research papers and works-in-progress produced by Scholars and their faculty mentors within the *Scholars* program community. As of July 2012, 49 Working Papers had been issued. (The program [website](#) features the most recent working papers. See the [list of Working Papers](#) at the end of this report.)
- Fosters alumni engagement through regional meetings, receptions at professional association meetings, and a network of contacts
- Monitors program development at the sites through annual site visits and frequent telephone contact
- Works with and supports a 13-member [national advisory committee](#)
- Reports to RWJF regarding program activities, issues, and finances.

Alan B. Cohen, ScD, professor of health policy and management at Boston University and director of its Health Policy Institute has been the director of the national program since its inception in 1992, leaving his position as vice president for research and evaluation at RWJF in order to run the program.

Catherine M. Player, MA is the deputy program director. She succeeded Eileen M. Connor, MHSA, who retired in 2007.

### ***National Advisory Committee***

Mark A. Peterson, PhD, professor of public policy, political science, and law in the Luskin School of Public Affairs, University of California, Los Angeles, chairs the committee. Rashi Fein, PhD, professor of the economics of medicine (emeritus) at Harvard Medical School, is chair emeritus.

National advisory committee members advise and support national program office staff on outreach, recruitment, eligibility criteria, and other program policy issues. They participate in site visits along with RWJF and national program office staff.

Committee members also provide advice and guidance to Scholars. For example, some members of the committee are editors of health journals and have provided special, intensive manuscript assistance to Scholars. Others have co-authored journal articles or book chapters with Scholars.

In 1997, RWJF expanded the national advisory committee in order to include greater representation from the three social science disciplines; add cultural, ethnic, and geographic diversity; and strengthen efforts to recruit Scholars.

In 2002, and again in 2005, RWJF changed the committee's composition, adding representation from alumni and rotating the membership to obtain new perspectives. As of 2012, three program alumni serve on the national advisory committee.

### ***Host Universities***

The universities at which the program operates create a training environment where Scholars explore health-related research topics, share research and policy ideas with Scholars from other disciplines, and have senior faculty mentors who guide them in their work.

The mentors provide a range of advice, including career counseling. In some cases, they collaborate with Scholars on joint endeavors; in other cases, they provide feedback on the Scholars' work.

While the program differs across the universities, each:

- Offers seminars in health policy and health-related topics
- Sponsors a series of multidisciplinary workshops where Scholars present their research
- Encourages faculty members to work with Scholars on their research
- Establishes linkages across departments within the university

Scholars have access to faculty from the social sciences, medicine, public health, public policy, and other fields in an environment conducive to disciplinary and multidisciplinary learning and collaborative research.

Senior faculty members at each university serve as project directors. They are responsible for:

- Securing ongoing involvement of senior social science and health faculty
- Recruiting new Scholars
- Overseeing the design and delivery of seminars and workshops
- Supervising a steering or executive committee
- Providing support and guidance to individual Scholars
- Managing expenditures
- Attending the annual meeting
- Working closely with the national program office and the national advisory committee to establish program goals, policies, and priorities

In 1992, the program's staff, with support from the national advisory committee and RWJF staff, undertook a rigorous solicitation and review process to select the first three host universities. The national advisory committee recommended three universities to RWJF:

- University of California at Berkeley/University of California at San Francisco (combined site)
- University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich.
- Yale University, New Haven, Conn.

RWJF accepted these recommendations. See [Appendix 1](#) for details of the early host university selection process.

In 2000, RWJF decided to retain two of the three original host universities (University of California at Berkeley/San Francisco, and the University of Michigan) and to select a new third host university.

Six universities with nationally ranked departments in all three social science disciplines were invited to apply. Four universities applied, three were visited, and in April 2002, RWJF selected Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., as the new third host university. The first group of Scholars at Harvard entered in August 2003.

On the program's website are brief descriptions of each university program:

- The [Harvard University program](#), housed at The Institute for Quantitative Social Science. Katherine Swartz, PhD, professor of health policy and economics in the department of health policy and management at the School of Public Health, directs the program.
- The [University of California at Berkeley/San Francisco program](#), housed at the School of Public Health at the University of California, Berkeley. John Ellwood, PhD, professor of public policy at Berkeley's Goldman School of Public Policy, directs the program.
- The [University of Michigan program](#), housed at the Department of Health Management and Policy in the School of Public Health. Edward C. Norton, PhD, professor in the department of health management and policy and the department of economics, directs the program.

## Scholar Selection and Placement

To be eligible, applicants must be new or recent PhDs (i.e., received within the previous five years) in the disciplines of economics, political science, or sociology. Scholars are selected via a multi-stage process. Peterson, chair of the national advisory committee, says, "At no time in their careers will they be so carefully reviewed. The applications are

reviewed by eight members of the national advisory committee, faculty at the universities where they apply, and the faculty directors at those sites. We talk about every applicant and don't rule anyone out.”

See the program's [website](#) for more information on Scholar eligibility.

While most Scholars enter the program without prior backgrounds in health or health policy, they must demonstrate interest in conducting health-related research. They must also demonstrate a willingness to engage with colleagues from other disciplines and an ability to communicate with people who have different perspectives from their own.

In general, Scholars are required to devote two years to the program, taking up full-time residence at their host university, although these requirements may be modified if special circumstances warrant. While in the program, Scholars are not permitted to accept outside teaching, administrative, or consulting duties.

Each Scholar receives an annual stipend (\$89,000 per year as of 2012). Scholars are expected to make progress in their research, participate in seminars and workshops offered under the program, and present their work to colleagues within and across the disciplines. In addition, they attend annual meetings of the program.

An individual Scholar's participation in the second year is conditional on a determination by the host university's site director that the Scholar's performance during the first year was satisfactory.

In recent years, the national program office has received about 130–140 applications each October. Through 2009, about 12 individuals were selected to receive fellowships, four at each site.<sup>3</sup> Due to reductions in funding, only nine Scholars have been selected each year since 2010.

See the program's website for profiles of [current Scholars](#) and a listing of [alumni](#) and their organizational affiliations.

## **Marketing**

Scholar recruitment and selection begins with marketing the program to targeted universities and candidates.

In addition to issuing a general call for applications, the national program office sends application materials to the chairs, placement advisers, and directors of graduate studies in nationally ranked departments of economics, political science, and sociology, asking them to introduce the program to students, recent alumni, and junior faculty members.

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<sup>3</sup> A supplemental grant (ID# 053869) in 2005 allowed the national program office, in consultation with the national advisory committee, to recruit two additional scholars from 2005 to 2008.

National program office staff host an informational breakfast for potential Scholars at annual meetings of the American Economic Association, American Political Science Association, and American Sociological Association. Current Scholars and alumni usually attend these breakfasts and describe their experiences in the program. In addition, the national program office hosts a general recruitment webinar to reach additional candidates.

Over time, the program has had growing success attracting high-caliber Scholars. In 1994–1996, 71 percent of Scholars came from the top 25 departments in their fields; from 2005 to 2010, that figure was 90 percent. Many entering Scholars have received prestigious awards during their graduate studies:

- Some 81 Scholars received awards for either best doctoral dissertation or best graduate student paper.
- Five Scholars received the American Sociological Association's Best Dissertation Award.

### ***Recruiting Minority Scholars***

From its inception, the program has been committed to recruiting Scholars from diverse racial and ethnic groups. RWJF and the national program office understood that drawing minority Scholars to the program was important to ensure program diversity and to ensure that minority perspectives inform health policy research and, ultimately, health policy.

In the early years, attracting a diverse applicant pool proved challenging, as the number of minority students in economics, political science, and sociology doctoral programs across the nation was small. The national program office worked with current Scholars and alumni, as well as with chairs and faculty of economics, political science, and sociology departments to identify and actively recruit minorities.

Approaches to identifying and recruiting minority candidates over time have included:

- Adding explicit language to the call for applications, the program website, and all promotional materials that encourage applications from candidates in groups historically underrepresented in economics, political science, and sociology
- Adding video content to the website—such as interviews with Scholars and alumni—that presents a visual indication of the program's commitment to diversity
- Appointing distinguished minority scholars to the national advisory committee
- Creating an Ambassadors Program in which alumni contact and engage potential minority candidates, encouraging them to apply

Minority representation among Scholars has increased substantially over time. In the first five years of the program, no more than one minority Scholar was chosen in any year. Over the decade 2003–2012, 30 percent of Scholars chosen were members of minority groups. Of the 47 minority Scholars recruited from the program's inception through 2012:

- Twenty (43%) were Black.
- Sixteen (34%) were Asian or Pacific Islander.
- Nine (19%) were Hispanic.
- Two (4%) were from other minority groups or were biracial.

### **Annual Meeting**

The program holds an annual meeting in late May or early June. From 1996 through 2009, meetings were held in Aspen, Colo. Starting with 2010, the meeting has been held in a different area of the country each year.

The annual meeting brings together Scholars from three cohorts—those completing their first year, those completing their second year, and those about to enter the program. Site directors, members of the national advisory committee, site faculty, alumni, national program office and RWJF staff, and participants in other RWJF human capital programs also attend. In order to facilitate networking, program staff circulates a list of the editorial affiliations of all meeting participants and encourages Scholars to connect with attendees who may be editors or editorial board members of journals in which they have an interest.

During the meetings, second-year Scholars present the research they have carried out while in the program, while first-year Scholars introduce their research topics and test ideas about hypotheses and methodology.

This “All Scholars, All the Time” format has been embraced enthusiastically by Scholars and other program participants as the standard for all future annual meetings of the program.

### **Promoting the Work**

To promote the program to candidates and universities, the national program office annually updates the program [website](#) to include a brief description of each host university, biographical information for current Scholars and program leaders, and a list of collaborating faculty and program alumni.

The national program office also annually produces an internal program directory with contact information for current Scholars, alumni, national advisory committee members, project directors, key faculty, and national program office and RWJF staff.

[Burness Communications](#) of Bethesda, Md., provided a range of media support services to Scholars and alumni in the early years of the program. In 2008, RWJF commissioned [IQ Solutions](#), a Rockville, Md.-based firm to provide these services to the *Scholars* program and other RWJF human capital programs.

These services include workshops held at each university to help Scholars learn how to present their research in popular media outlets, and ad hoc services to help individual Scholars and alumni place op-ed articles or prepare for media interviews.

## Interaction with Other RWJF Human Capital Programs

RWJF sponsors other programs involving researchers in universities, including:

- [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Clinical Scholars Program](#) (See [Program Results](#))
- [Investigator Awards in Health Policy Research](#) (See [Program Results](#)). The *Investigator Awards* program is moving to Boston University as of January 2013. Cohen will direct both the *Investigator Awards* and *Scholars* programs. See [Going Forward](#) for information about the move.
- [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health & Society Scholars](#) (See [Program Results](#))

As of 2012, one of the *Clinical Scholars Program* sites and three of the *Health & Society Scholars* program sites overlap with the three sites in the *Scholars in Health Policy Research* program. Site directors and national program office staff develop opportunities for Scholars and Fellows from these different programs to meet each other and work together:

- Site directors have encouraged Scholars from other programs to attend this program's seminars, brown bag lunches, and research presentations.
- Scholars from the *Clinical Scholars Program*, the *Health & Society Scholars* program, and the *Harold Amos Medical Faculty Development Program*<sup>4</sup> attend the *Scholars in Health Policy Research* program annual meeting.
- Scholars from the *Health Policy Research* program attend annual meetings of the *Clinical Scholars Program*, the *Health & Society Scholars* program, and the *Investigator Awards* program.

In June 2005, the program collaborated with the *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health Policy Fellows* program (see [Program Results](#) for more information on this program) to conduct a three-day Health Policy Synergy Workshop at the Institute of

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<sup>4</sup> The *Harold Amos Medical Faculty Development Program* provides four-year awards for postdoctoral research to physicians and dentists from historically underrepresented groups who are committed to developing careers in academic medicine and dentistry, improving the health of underserved populations, furthering understanding, and eliminating health disparities. For more information, see the program's [website](#) and the [Program Results](#).

Medicine in Washington.<sup>5</sup> The workshop encouraged policy research discourse among participants of both programs with the aim of prompting collaboration between Scholars and Fellows on important health policy issues of mutual interest. The workshops expanded in 2006 to include several other RWJF human capital programs and continued through 2008, when the *Health Policy Fellows Program* discontinued them due to funding cuts by RWJF.

RWJF has used the *Scholars in Health Policy Research* program as a model to design and manage other human capital national programs. The most recent example is the RWJF Health & Society Scholars program, which equips researchers to investigate the social, behavioral, environmental, and biological determinants of health and to develop intervention strategies that encompass and integrate these determinants to improve the health of populations.

The national program office has also advised program designers involved in establishing fellowship programs at other universities, other foundations, and federal agencies.

## Program Evolution

The program has evolved over time, both in response to evaluations and as the national advisory committee, the site directors, and the national program staff have recognized and addressed problems and challenges. In particular, the program changed some Scholar selection criteria and developed special strategies to recruit economists. For information about how the program has evolved, see [Appendix 2](#).

## EVALUATIONS

RWJF commissioned two external and two internal evaluations of the program:

- Prior to program renewals in 1997 and 2001, RWJF commissioned the external evaluations.
- RWJF commissioned a self-assessment by the national program office in 2004 and again in 2008.

See [Appendix 3](#) for a description of the methodology, results, and findings of the 1997 and 2001 evaluations.

In the 2004 and 2008 self-evaluations, the national program office examined the quality and diversity of entering Scholars, the program's impacts on alumni, alumni influence on health policy thinking, and program impacts on participating universities and faculty. It drew largely upon program data files, interviews with site directors and faculty, and correspondence with alumni and current Scholars to conduct these evaluations.

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<sup>5</sup> ID# 053283.

Since 2008, the national program office has continued to track a variety of measures of program effectiveness and impact, and reported results to RWJF periodically.

## OVERALL PROGRAM RESULTS

The national program office cited the following results in reports to RWJF:

- **As of July 2012, 200 Scholars had completed the two-year fellowship: 64 economists, 71 political scientists, and 65 sociologists.** An additional 18 were currently enrolled. See the program [website](#) for a list of [current Scholars](#), their biographies and selected publications, and for a list of [alumni](#). Only two Scholars did not complete the program. One of those continues to participate in program-related activities and sits on the program's national advisory committee.

This report includes profiles of 13 Scholars (for a link to each profile, go to the [Scholar Profile List](#)).

- **As of November 2011, 163 alumni held academic appointments at universities and colleges:**
  - Some 33 were full professors, 63 were associate professors, and 67 were assistant professors.
  - Of the full professors, five were provosts or deans at top universities; six were department chairs; eight were faculty chairs, directors or co-directors of research centers or institutes; and nine were chairs or directors of academic programs.
- **Some 78 percent of tenure-eligible Scholars had received tenure as of November 2011.** Of 116 Scholars who had received their degrees before 2004—and, thus, had been out of graduate school for the seven or more years considered typical for tenure consideration—90 (or 77.6%) had received tenure. In addition, two alumni who had received their degrees more recently were tenured.
- **As of July 2012, Scholar alumni had published 39 books, 167 book chapters, and 915 peer-reviewed journal articles about health policy or health.** They had also published 73 books, 301 chapters, and 843 peer-reviewed articles on other topics in their fields. Of the health-related articles:
  - Some 657 appeared in health-related journals such as *Health Affairs*, *Health Services Research*, and the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.
  - Some 258 of the articles appeared in discipline-related (economic, political science, or sociology) journals such as the *American Economic Review*, *American Sociological Review*, and the *Journal of Politics*—among the elite disciplinary journals according to Program Director Cohen.

- **Some 68 different alumni have produced a total of 198 works that have been cited in the literature at least 75 times each.** The 12 most often-cited publications each received at least 300 citations.
- **Alumni have successfully pursued and secured research funding from both public and private sources:**
  - As of November 2011, alumni had obtained at least 313 grants (either as principal investigator or co-principal investigator) from numerous federal agencies (e.g., Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, National Institute on Aging, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, National Institute on Drug Abuse, National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration), as well as from large private foundations (e.g., John A. Hartford Foundation, Pew Charitable Trusts, and Russell Sage Foundation).
  - Alumni also had obtained 62 grants from various RWJF research programs, including the *Investigator Awards in Health Policy Research* (also see [Program Results](#)), *Substance Abuse Policy Research Program* (also see [Program Results](#)) and *Changes in Health Care Financing and Organization* (for more information see [Program Results](#)).
- **Alumni hold or have held 149 editorial affiliations with 101 different journals.** Positions include editor, co-editor, associate editor, or editorial board member.
- **More than three dozen alumni have held key public positions:**
  - As of June 2012, some 46 had served on health-related scientific advisory panels for such organizations as the Institute of Medicine and the National Science Foundation. In addition, 32 had served on discipline-related scientific advisory panels for such organizations as the Federal Communications Commission.
  - As of August 2012, six had served or were serving as staff economists for the President's Council of Economic Advisers, including one as chief economist and five as senior economists for health policy or for labor, education, and welfare.
  - Two have served in high-ranking positions in the Treasury Department and the National Institute of Mental Health.
- **Alumni have distinguished themselves academically.** As of June 2012, they had received 105 post-program national honors and awards from major disciplinary and health policy professional associations and organizations.
- **Alumni have taught 108 courses in health policy in their respective departments and schools as of June 2012.**

- **In 2009, alumni, faculty, and members of the national advisory committee helped to create the Section on Health Politics and Policy within the American Political Science Association (APSA).** Several alumni hold or have held elected positions within the section and also within the Section on Public Policy (the fourth largest section among 49 sections of the APSA).

## LESSONS LEARNED

1. **Create cohesiveness within each cohort of Scholars/Fellows.** The "chemistry" among Scholars at each site and within each cohort is important to creating a community of Scholars. Program components such as the Working Papers and, most importantly, the annual meeting help to create a sense of community. (National Program Director/Cohen; Deputy Director/Connor)
2. **Scholar selection criteria should include not only intelligence, but other factors as well.** Additional important criteria are strong interpersonal skills and capacity to appreciate the views and perspectives of people from other disciplines and people with different perspectives. This requires national program office staff and national advisory committee members to be open-minded and flexible when selecting and supervising Scholars. They have to hold Scholars accountable for participating actively in the program, engaging with one another, and contributing to the field of health policy research. (National Program Director/Cohen; Deputy Director/Connor)
3. **Engage in assertive, targeted efforts to recruit minority Scholars and Fellows.** National program office efforts to actively recruit minorities paid off. These efforts included adding language to all program documents encouraging minorities to apply, appointing minorities to the national advisory committee, and engaging alumni Scholars as ambassadors to recruit minorities. As a result, minorities have comprised from 31 percent to 44 percent of Scholars recruited annually since 2005. (National Program Director/Cohen; Deputy Director/Player; National Advisory Committee/Peterson)
4. **Develop strong site governance structures in order to avoid burnout among university site directors.** University site directors play a more critical role in the program than originally anticipated. The active, ongoing, on-site presence of site directors has been essential to keeping the program on track. Over time, the sites have developed mechanisms for sharing responsibility, and all three have some form of steering or executive committee to assist the directors with program oversight.

Each site has had a smooth transition in leadership at some point in the program. Berkeley and Michigan experimented with co-directors but later returned to a single site director with clearly defined support roles for other faculty members serving on the executive committee or as associate directors. (Site/McLaughlin; National Program Director/Cohen; Deputy Director/Connor; Evaluator/Shortell)

5. **Conduct aggressive scholar recruitment and involve the national advisory committee, the national program office, RWJF staff, faculty from the sites, and current and former Scholars.** Broad-based marketing strategies that solicit responses from a wide spectrum of recent PhDs have proven less useful than more targeted and focused strategies that rely on personal or professional connections with individual departments and faculty members who will nominate the best candidates. The Ambassador Program, in which alumni Scholars visit select universities and meet with specific potential Scholars, has proved an effective recruitment strategy, especially for minorities. (RWJF Program Officer/Colby; Evaluator/Shortell; National Advisory Committee/Peterson, Mechanic; National Program Director/Cohen).

6. **Expose Scholars to policy settings by means other than a Washington internship.** The program had originally incorporated a Washington internship opportunity for Scholars, but many did not wish to move multiple times during a two-year fellowship. The program has instead focused on steering Scholars toward academic careers in disciplinary departments or professional schools, and also by conducting workshops with other Scholar/Fellow programs to broaden the Scholars' views.

In 2011, Paula M. Lantz, PhD, a Scholar alumna and then-program director at the University of Michigan, brought Michigan Scholars to Washington for two days, where they met with key policy-makers in executive and legislative branch organizations. According to Cohen, “Scholars loved this experience and learned from it, so we are going to formalize it and involve all sites.” (National Program Director/Cohen; RWJF Program Officer/Colby; Evaluator/Palmer)

7. **Use publishing opportunities as a way to impact health policy.** The program can provide a forum for a larger discussion of health policy, particularly through the publications of its alumni and Scholars. The Foundation contracts with outside communications firms to provide media support and advice to Scholars regarding how to write and submit articles and opinion pieces for newspapers and other media. (National Program Director/Cohen; Deputy Director/Player; Evaluator/Shortell)

8. **Promote national advisory committees of human capital programs reaching decisions by consensus rather than by vote.** National advisory committee members enjoy several features of the program, but their success in selecting Scholars based on consensus has enhanced the deliberative process and makes their service on the committee a positive experience. (National Advisory Committee/Peterson)

9. **Be prepared to invest in a human capital program for a long time.** Cohen says, “This takes time. It has taken a generation to see that the program has met its original goals—we have created a generation of nearly 200 Scholars, 85 percent of whom are in academic positions and virtually all of whom are engaged in health policy research. Yet, there is still a need. If the Scholars program went away, there would not be an infrastructure to continue the work.” (National Program Director/Cohen)

## GOING FORWARD

RWJF reauthorized the program in May 2012 for three years.

In fall 2011, as part of a larger decision to rotate some national program offices and national advisory committees, RWJF asked Cohen and other national program directors to “re-compete” for their programs. It offered Cohen the opportunity to propose to direct the long-standing *Investigator Awards in Health Policy Research* as well.

Cohen submitted a proposal to run both programs; in May 2012, RWJF approved his proposal. In addition to staff efficiencies resulting from combining the office, “We can offer more activities for both programs that would not be feasible with separate national program offices,” he says.

Several future activities will center on alumni of both programs. These include:

- **Creating a mentoring network of alumni across both programs.** “We will build an integrated, joint alumni mentoring network in which senior Scholar alumni and senior Investigators will be paired with current Scholars and recent alumni. This will promote collaboration among participants,” said Cohen.
- **Expanding alumni networking opportunities.** The expansion includes sponsoring events at professional meetings where alumni of both programs tend to congregate, increasing the number of alumni receptions held at professional meetings, and holding periodic regional alumni meetings to promote greater synergy between alumni of both programs.
- **Expanding opportunities for Investigators.** This would include attending the *Scholars in Health Policy Research* annual meetings in the same way that Scholars now attend *Investigators* annual meetings.

Cohen also plans to start or formalize activities within each program:

- For the *Investigator Awards* program, he plans to organize and conduct an annual health policy briefing session that will showcase findings produced by Investigators, and biennially sponsor an Investigator-led research conference that will produce an edited volume of research papers based on their work.
- For the *Scholars in Health Policy Research* program, he plans to build the two-day Washington visits with health policy officials into the ongoing structure of the Scholar experience.

He also plans to establish a Research Impact Advisory Council composed of Scholar alumni who have been successful in informing health policy. “We will seek their advice in devising strategies for broader and more effective dissemination of Scholars’ research findings to policy-makers and other audiences,” Cohen said.

In addition, the number of Scholar Ambassadors will be increased to help in recruiting a diverse pool of future Scholars.

### **An Ongoing Challenge: Assessing Long-Term Program Effects**

Both of the early external evaluators remarked on the difficulties inherent in assessing the effects of the program:

- Would Scholars' careers have been different without the program?
- How do RWJF Scholars compare with comparable Scholars in other programs?
- If there is an increase in interdisciplinary research at universities participating in the program, to what extent is the increase due to that participation and to what extent is it due to a more general appreciation of the value of interdisciplinary work?

Cohen says, “This remains an issue for the future and I would like to know the answer too. These questions are difficult if not impossible to answer.” The national program office developed indirect measures to determine whether the program has influenced the field of health policy research. These measures include publications and citations and changes in university curricula or program offerings. These measures are useful but they are not conclusive.

Peterson, the national advisory committee chair, asks, “When do we know we have come to the end? RWJF has always been extraordinary with its human capital programs, in that you don’t know for years and years whether these programs work. Once we get to the point where there are Scholars in top places in enough institutions, and they are training others, have the seeds the program planted become big tall redwoods?”

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## APPENDIX 1

### Original Host University Selection Process

The national program office, in consultation with RWJF staff and members of the national advisory committee, guided a process for soliciting and selecting host universities.

In 1992, the national program office invited 18 academic institutions to apply to serve as hosts, and 13 submitted proposals.

Initial criteria for consideration included nationally ranked departments in at least two of the three social science disciplines and one or more strong professional schools in public health, medicine, or public policy.

Proposals were assessed based on:

- Clarity of understanding of program goals
- Quality, strength, and appropriateness of the training approach
- Administrative structure
- Experience and qualifications of the proposed site director and key faculty
- Evidence of interest and support from relevant disciplinary departments
- Quality of the work plan
- Budget

The national advisory committee selected seven universities for site visits and after the visits recommended three universities to RWJF:

- University of California at Berkeley and San Francisco (combined site)
- The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich.
- Yale University, New Haven, Conn.

RWJF accepted these recommendations.

## APPENDIX 2

### The Program's Evolution

#### *Scholar Selection*

Initially, the program recruited only Scholars from the three targeted disciplines who had received their doctorates no more than three years prior to entering the program. This criterion posed two problems:

- Many new PhD Scholars spent their second year in the program seeking permanent positions, at times to the detriment of their research.
- Staff felt the program could benefit from a broader and more enriched pool of applicants.

To address these problems, the program expanded Scholar selection criteria to include candidates who had received their doctorates up to five years prior to entering the program.

On occasion, the program accepted applications from candidates who had PhDs in related disciplines, so long as they could demonstrate proficiency in economics, political science, or sociology.

However, the strength of the applicant pool from the three targeted disciplines has grown so much over time that, since 2006, the program has rarely considered applicants with PhDs in related disciplines.

When it started, the program accepted Scholars both with and without backgrounds in health. Over time, the national program office staff, the national advisory committee, and RWJF staff concluded that the program would make a greater contribution if, all other things being equal, it gave greater weight to applicants who lacked health backgrounds.

Staff believed that in recruiting applicants with little or no prior exposure to or experience in health, the program would be more effective in influencing the careers of Scholars who would not otherwise have considered health policy research.

In its early years, the program also addressed other specific challenges in Scholar recruitment, selection, and placement:

- **Recruiting economists.** At the beginning, it was difficult to attract the best economists to the program. Postdoctoral placements were not common in the discipline of economics, and economists did not find these placements attractive. Many economists tend to be steeped in theoretical or in narrow empirical research, and may be less interested in applied policy research or in qualitative research methods.

To recruit the best economists, the program:

- Added prominent economists from disciplinary departments to the national advisory committee
- Targeted recruitment efforts to distinguished departments of economics and talented young economists
- Experimented with 18-month fellowships for economists who had obtained deferred faculty appointments

The proportion of economists from top-tier PhD programs has increased dramatically since 2001, with 27 of 32 economists recruited in 2001–2008 coming from those top-tier programs. Over time, the discipline appears to have become more receptive to postdoctoral placements. “There have been two or three cases within the last six cohorts in which an economics Scholar used our program as leverage to get a deferred appointment at a top-ranked department,” Cohen says.

Peterson agrees: “When we started, economists did not take a postdoc—it was considered a failure, an indication that you couldn’t get the ‘good’ job. Now, they not only take this postdoc, they use it as leverage with their future universities.”

The wider acceptance of the program within the discipline of economics has also affected the ultimate placement of the economics Scholars. While political science and sociology alumni predominantly hold appointments in departments of political science or sociology, economics alumni were more likely to be located in professional schools such as schools of public health or public policy. However, in recent cohorts, economists increasingly have entered the program with deferred faculty appointments from departments of economics.

- **Engaging sociologists.** Sociologists are more likely to conduct qualitative research than are economists or political scientists. In the early years of the program, some tension arose among Scholars over the relative importance of these different research frameworks and methods.

In order to fully engage sociologists, RWJF and the national program office changed the sociologist mix of the national advisory committee to include both quantitative and qualitative research methodologists from disciplinary departments. Each year, they also strive to recruit sociologist Scholars from both methodological orientations. In addition, the program has learned to emphasize and reinforce among all Scholars an appreciation for the broad range of research methodologies employed by all three disciplines.

## APPENDIX 3

### External Evaluations

RWJF commissioned two external evaluations of the *Scholars in Health Policy Research* program. Both relied on interviews with, and feedback from, RWJF and national program office staff, national advisory committee members, host university site directors, faculty, current and former Scholars, and selected outsiders.

#### *The First External Evaluation*

In 1996, four years after the program began, RWJF contracted with Burton Weisbrod, PhD, (ID# 30054) and Stephen Shortell, PhD, (ID# 30081) both from Northwestern University, Chicago, (Shortell has since moved to Berkeley and become dean of the School of Public Health) to explore if there was a need for the program, whether its approach was the most appropriate, and how effectively the program was being implemented, and to issue recommendations for moving forward.

#### Findings

- There is a continuing need for the Scholars program.
- There was no evidence that the program required substantial restructuring, but there were areas that warranted further consideration. These included expanding the program to include PhDs from more disciplines, increasing cohort size to more than 12 and reducing the length of the program from two years to 12–15 months.
- The program was successful at informing Scholars about the health care system and facilitating their ability to identify and analyze important policy issues. Helping Scholars understand the requirements of interdisciplinary research, however, appeared to be more challenging.
- The fact that the program differs at each university and offers different environments to Scholars has most likely attracted better Scholars than would have been the case if only one model had been offered. Scholars differ in their goals, personalities, and desire for structure, indicating that no single approach across universities is optimal.

#### Recommendations

- Communicate the program purpose and its multiple objectives more effectively
- Encourage greater collaboration and information sharing among the host universities
- Improve the annual meeting
- Pay greater attention to alumni of the program
- Monitor long-run program effects

- Consider issues related to stipends and recruitment

### Changes to the Program

All of the findings and recommendations from the first evaluation were carefully considered by the national advisory committee, the national program office staff, the site directors, and RWJF staff. Where possible and deemed appropriate, efforts were undertaken to modify the program. Specifically, the national program office:

- Experimented with different annual meeting formats, eventually settling on a format in which only Scholars are included as presenters
- Encouraged information sharing across sites
- Worked with sites to recruit sociologists from diverse subfields within the discipline
- Implemented 18-month fellowships for Scholars with deferred faculty appointments
- Introduced regional alumni meetings (discontinued in 2008 because of funding reductions) and expanded alumni networking opportunities at annual meetings of major professional associations

In some cases, however, the national advisory committee members, national program office staff, and RWJF staff concluded that a recommended change was not in the best interest of the program.

### ***The Second External Evaluation***

In 2000, John Palmer, PhD, of Syracuse University (ID# 38557), led a team of investigators conducting the second evaluation to determine the answers to three questions:

- How well is the program achieving its objectives, and is it worthwhile for RWJF to continue funding it?
- What are the major consequences of the program, and what is going well and what is not?
- Are there major or minor changes in the structure or other aspects of the program that ought to be considered?

Six highly respected academic scholars (two from each discipline) reviewed resumes and two papers submitted by each of 45 Scholars from the first four cohorts.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The academic scholars were (position at the time of the evaluation): Paul D. Cleary, PhD, professor of health care policy, Harvard Medical School, Boston; David M. Cutler, PhD, professor of economics, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.; David T. Ellwood, PhD, professor of political economy, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.; Lawrence R. Jacobs, PhD, associate professor of political science,

Investigators also compiled a citation index and reviewed Scholar publications for health policy relevance. They had hoped to create a baseline for comparing Scholars' career trajectories with careers of comparable peers who had not been in the program, but were unable to obtain cooperation from enough of those peers.

## Findings

- The program was more or less on track and evidencing a strong upward trajectory. Faculty, Scholars, and staff generally voiced great enthusiasm for the program. The applicant pool of Scholars has improved over time. Scholars in later cohorts report that the program diverted their research and interests into health policy to some degree.

The responses from the academic reviewers of Scholar research were generally enthusiastic. "All in all, I see this as a very good program, one that is likely to help improve health policy while at the same time enriching academia by prodding it to make contact with real-world policy-making," wrote one.

- The program was engendering far more intellectual dialogue and interdisciplinary perspectives among the participating faculty than would otherwise be occurring. Scholars are also networking with each other and with faculty, both at their own universities and at the other participating sites.
- The program's overall structure was sound. It appeared to target the right mix of disciplines, and the two-year program length works well. It was also enlisting Scholars at the right point in their careers.
- Program impact varied across the academic disciplines. The program appeared to have performed best in the political science field. Sociologists were the most likely to voice discontent, even though they were a strong group of Scholars. The economists were not as strong academically as the Scholars from the other two disciplines.
- The program environment varied greatly across the three universities. The universities took different philosophical approaches and offered different curricula and resources, and the site directors brought diverse intellectual and operating styles. This diversity allowed a better fit between Scholars and particular departments and universities, and helped attract a talented pool of Scholars.
- Despite changes over time, program curricula, particularly the formal seminars, continued to get mixed reviews from the Scholars.
- The tension inherent in balancing policy relevance and disciplinary impact was felt by many of the Scholars. Over time, the program has tilted in an academic direction, with Scholars publishing in academic journals within their own disciplines rather than

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University of Minnesota, Minneapolis; Benjamin I. Page, PhD, professor of political science, Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill.; Marta Tienda, PhD, professor of sociology and public affairs, Princeton University, Princeton, N.J.

in health policy journals and seeking careers at universities rather than at policy institutes.

## Recommendations

- Take steps to attract more talented economists
- Create opportunities for sites to share experiences and ideas, such as periodic retreats or sessions at annual meetings
- In promoting the program, be explicit about program strategy
- Strengthen Scholars' involvement with the health policy community
- Increase involvement of alumni in the program

## Changes to the Program

As in the case of the first evaluation, these findings and recommendations were given careful consideration and, where deemed appropriate by the advisers and staff members, efforts were undertaken to refine and improve the program. As a result of these efforts, since 2001 the program has:

- Increased the diversity of both Scholars and national advisory committee members
- Recruited highly talented economics Scholars from top PhD programs
- Encouraged curriculum revision across the sites
- Obtained increased budgetary resources to bring alumni to the annual meetings
- Worked with the *Health Policy Fellows* awardees and other scholars/Fellows to create opportunities for Scholars and alumni to interact with Fellows and to gain greater exposure to policy-makers

## RECENT WORKING PAPERS

Below is a listing of the most recent working papers, 49–40, which are available [online](#).

W49—*Reexamining the Impact of Family Planning Programs on U.S. Fertility: Evidence from the War on Poverty and the Early Years of Title X*, Martha Bailey (Cohort 12—Michigan), August 2011.

W48—*Who Deserves Health Care? The Effects of Causal Attributions and Group Cues on Public Attitudes about Responsibility for Health Care Costs*, Julia Lynch (Cohort 10—Harvard) and Sarah E. Gollust, January 2011.

W47—*Playing Fair: Fairness Beliefs and Health Policy Preferences in the United States*, Julia Lynch (Cohort 10—Harvard) and Sarah E. Gollust (RWJF Health and Society Scholar), April 2010.

W46—*The Effect of Education on Adult Mortality and Health: Evidence from Britain*, Heather Royer (Cohort 11—Michigan) and Damon Clark, January 2010.

W45—*Deadline Effects in Regulatory Review: A Methodological and Empirical Analysis*, Daniel Carpenter (Cohort 5—Michigan), Jacqueline Chattopadhyay, Susan Moffitt (Cohort 13—Harvard), Justin Grimmer, Jake Bowers (Cohort 12 – Harvard), Clayton Nall, and Evan James Zucker, October 2009.

W44—*The Effects of Soft Drink Taxes on Child and Adolescent Consumption and Weight Outcomes*, David Frisvold (Cohort 13—Michigan), Jason M. Fletcher, and Nathan Tefft, August 2009.

W43—*Prospects for Reform: Exploring Effective Health Policymaking in Congress*, Craig Volden (Cohort 8—Michigan) and Alan E. Wiseman, August 2009.

W42—*The Politics of Food Safety in the Age of Global Trade: The Codex Alimentarius Commission in the SPS-Agreement of the WTO*, Tim Büthe (Cohort 14—Berkeley/UCSF), August 2009.

W41—*The Downside of Deadlines*, Daniel Carpenter (Cohort 5—Michigan Program), Justin Grimmer, February 2009.

W40—*Towards an Efficient Mechanism for Prescription Drug Procurement*, Kyna Fong (Cohort 15—Berkeley/UCSF Program) and Michael Schwarz (Cohort 11—Berkeley/UCSF Program), February 2009.

## SCHOLAR PROFILE LIST

Profiles on a selection of scholars who have participated in the program are listed below. Click on a scholar's name to read the profile, which describes the scholar's background, work conducted under the program, and careers since participating. Profiles are current as of the date included after their names.

### **Daniel P. Carpenter, PhD (2006)**

Political Scientist

PhD, University of Chicago, 1996

Cohort 5 (1998–2000): University of Michigan

Position as of July 2012: Allie S. Freed Professor of Government

Director, Center for American Political Studies

Harvard University

Cambridge, Mass.

### **John Cawley, PhD (2007)**

Economist

PhD, University of Chicago

Cohort 6 (1999-2001): University of Michigan

Member of the national advisory committee for the program

Position as of July 2012: Professor, Departments of Policy Analysis and Management and Economics

Co-director, Institute for Health Economics, Health Behaviors and Disparities

Cornell University Ithaca, N.Y.

### **Cathy Cohen, PhD**

Political Scientist

Ph.D. from the University of Michigan, 1993

Cohort 3 (1996–1998): Yale University

Position as of November 2006: Professor

Political Science Department

University of Chicago

### **Dalton C. Conley, PhD (2006)**

Sociologist

PhD, Columbia University, 1996

Cohort 3 (1996–1998): University of California, Berkeley/ San Francisco

Position as of July 2012: Dean of Social Sciences  
University Professor and Professor, Department of Sociology  
School of Medicine and the Wagner School of Public Service  
New York University  
New York, N.Y.

**Kelly J. Devers, PhD (2006)**

Sociologist  
PhD, Northwestern University, 1994  
Cohort 1 (1994–1996): University of California at Berkeley/San Francisco  
Position as of July 2012: Adjunct Faculty, George Washington University, School of  
Public Health and Health Services  
Senior Fellow, Department of Health Policy  
Urban Institute  
Washington, D.C.

**William Encinosa, PhD (2006)**

Economist  
PhD, University of Florida, 1995  
Cohort 2 (1995–1997): University of Michigan  
Position as of July 2012: Senior Economist, Center for Delivery, Organization and  
Markets (CDOM)  
Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality  
United States Department of Health and Human Services  
Rockville, Md.

**Michael B. Greenstone, PhD (2006)**

Economist  
PhD, Princeton University, 1998  
Cohort 5 (1998–2000): University of California, Berkeley/San Francisco  
Position as of July 2012: 3M Professor of Economics, Department of Economics  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
Cambridge, Mass.

**Paula M. Lantz, PhD (2006)**

Sociologist  
PhD, University of Wisconsin, 1991  
Cohort 1 (1994–1996): University of Michigan

Position as of July 2012: Professor and Chair. Department of Health Policy  
George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services  
Washington, D.C.

**Jonathan B. Oberlander, PhD (2007)**

Political Scientist

PhD, Yale University, 1995

Cohort 2 (1995–1997): University of California at Berkeley/San Francisco

Position as of July 2012: Professor, Department of Social Medicine and Department of  
Health Policy and Administration

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Chapel Hill, N.C.

**Abigail C. Saguy, PhD (2007)**

Sociologist

PhD, Princeton University, 2000

Doctorat (French PhD) from the Ecole Normale Superieure and Ecole des Hautes Etudes  
en Sciences Sociales, 1999

Cohort 7 (2000–2002): Yale University

Position as of July 2012: Associate Professor and Vice Chair, Department of Sociology

Associate Professor, Department of Women's Studies

University of California at Los Angeles

Los Angeles, Calif.