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# Global Health CONNECTION

Your monthly source of Rutgers global health news, events, and resources  
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## Rutgers Global Health Institute Strategic Plan Update: A New Chapter Begins

We are excited to share that our new strategic plan is complete! The final plan will be displayed on our website and distributed this spring. We wanted to thank everyone who has contributed to the plan in various ways over the past year.

To summarize our new plan:

***Our vision*** is that of ***a world in which every community is healthy and thriving***. To achieve this vision, our mission is simple: ***we deliver health equity solutions locally and around the world***.

While our previous strategic plan had seven focus areas, our new plan will concentrate on three impact areas. These three impact areas highlight the priorities of our principal faculty's work in global health equity.

Our new strategic plan advances the university-wide goals of our institute ***by supporting and promoting global health efforts across all four of Rutgers' chancellor-led units, while fostering partnerships to create and implement lasting solutions in communities with the greatest need***. We also continue to expand our core membership. We now have over 185 members who continue to advance our global health goals through their partnerships, centers, and work across the university. We promote their work in addressing health inequities both at home and abroad.

Again, thank you all for your valuable input on the plan and your continued support.



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### Seed Grant Awards: Meet This Year's Recipients

We are happy to announce the recipients of this year's Rutgers Global Health Institute Seed Grants! We received an impressive number of applications from faculty across many of our schools in all four Chancellor-led units. After a thorough review process, we are thrilled to introduce the selected awardees and their projects.

Our awardees (in alphabetical order by last name):

**Christina Bergey:** *Determinants of malaria infection in rural Uganda*

**Edward Lee:** *Enhancing Perioperative Care in Ghana: A Collaborative Capacity-Building Initiative*

**Zorimar Rivera-Nunez:** *A mixed method approach to evaluate toxic metals exposure among agricultural, indigenous communities in the Southern Andes*

**Diana Roopchand:** *Andean Shilajit may alter the gut-brain axis in Alzheimer's Disease by improving intestinal inflammation and gut hormone secretion*

**Stanley Weiss:** *Examining the Deficiencies in Education and Screening for Cancer Among Men and Women in Medication-Assisted Drug Treatment Programs in Five New*

Congratulations to our 2025 Seed Grant awardees!

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## Honoring Excellence: Champion in Global Health Award

Last year, we held our annual membership meeting, which saw us awarding three remarkable individuals with the *Champion in Global Health Award*. This award honors Rutgers faculty, staff, students, and volunteers who demonstrate an extraordinary commitment to addressing health inequities locally and globally.

The first recipient of this award, honored in May 2024, was our former Communications Manager, **Lara De Meo Hoyt**. Lara was recognized for her long-standing dedication to Rutgers Global Health Institute and her pivotal role as the institute's first communications manager. Her leadership in building a strong communications foundation helped shape how we share our mission and impact. Lara's thoughtful storytelling and deep commitment to global health have remained a cornerstone of our work.

Our 2024 recipients have each made transformative contributions to global health:

### **John Damonti**

As President of the Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation, John Damonti has spent decades launching and leading initiatives that have reshaped global responses to HIV/AIDS and cancer care. His leadership of *Secure the Future*—a \$100 million commitment to AIDS programs in Africa—marked one of the largest global health efforts of its time. Through partnerships like *Global HOPE*, he's helped train pediatric oncologists and provide cancer treatment to thousands of children across Africa. His lifelong dedication to building equitable care systems has changed countless lives.

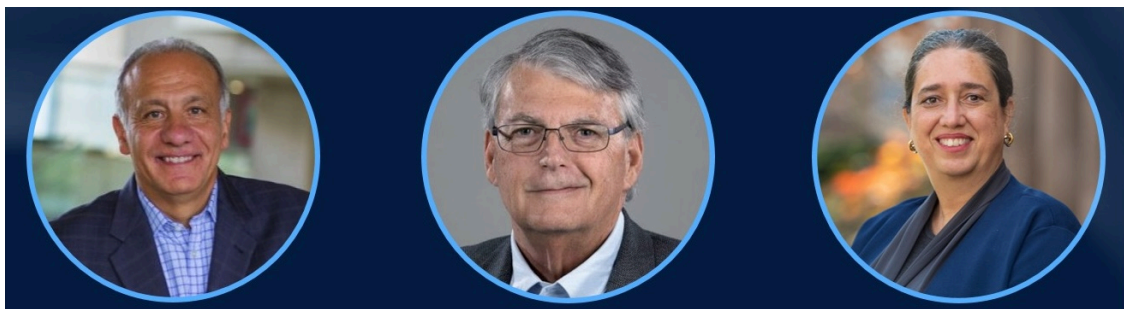
### **Brent Ruben**

A foundational leader at Rutgers, Brent Ruben played a pivotal role in shaping the institute's identity and strategy from its inception. He co-led the university-wide strategic planning process that helped define global health as both a local and international mission. As founder of the Rutgers Center for Organizational Leadership, he has fostered collaborations across disciplines, including hosting leadership summits with Botswana's government. His continued support through the institute's strategic planning process reflects his lasting commitment to sustainable, inclusive leadership in global health.

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A scholar, psychoanalyst, and founding executive director of the Rutgers Institute for the Study of Global Racial Justice, Michelle Stephens brings powerful insight to the intersection of race, health, and justice. Through initiatives like *Black Bodies: Black Health*, she has helped direct funding, research, and dialogue toward dismantling structural racism—a critical barrier to health equity. Her work has elevated the importance of centering racial justice in global health discussions and action.

These honorees exemplify leadership, compassion, and the vision that define what it means to be a Champion in Global Health. We are proud to recognize their impact on health equity and inspired by their continued efforts.



From left to right: John Damonti, Brent Ruben, and Michelle Stephens

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