

June 2026



Research in Action

Updates from the **Arnold School of Public Health** Office of Research

A NOTE FROM THE ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR RESEARCH AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Perspective, Patience, and Progress – P-Cubed!

Lately, when procrastinating on papers and grant writing after devouring the latest mystery novel, I've been doing what many of us do: turning to Google for answers (while still getting used to all of its new-ish AI features).

As we continue to navigate longer review timelines, delayed funding decisions, evolving processes for how those decisions are being made, and Notices of Award that still take longer than expected to arrive, I became curious about what others were saying and doing. So I spent some time reading articles and blogs from scientific organizations, research institutions, and university leaders to see how they were describing the current environment.

Not surprisingly, many of the conversations focused on funding uncertainty and concerns about the future of research – and I'll be participating in more of these discussions this week at the ASPPH

Sections Retreat. What struck me most was that nearly every article still stressed the same theme of perseverance.

Last summer, one organization described how funding uncertainty is affecting scientists across the country, noting that uncertainty itself can become a barrier to innovation when researchers are unable to plan their future work. Yet their message was encouraging: *“The past would indicate that science has continued to innovate in the face of political change or public disagreement, as well as changing funding priorities. We must continue to adapt and innovate”* (American Physiological Society). Around the same time, BioRender, yes, the same BioRender available through our school-wide license, published an article highlighting how researchers and institutions are finding new ways to collaborate and adapt to an increasingly unpredictable funding landscape.

One of our priorities this coming year will be to support investigators in identifying new opportunities and building / expanding research teams. We will be inviting a research development specialist from the Office of the VPR along with colleagues from the technology commercialization to meet with departments and centers and provide tailored funding prospecting and strategic guidance. These discussions will help us identify opportunities that align with our strengths and explore new ideas and partnerships.

One article from the American Association for the Advancement of Science offered a message that really resonated with me. Dr. Katy Hinman reminded readers that we must continue talking about the joy of science. Curiosity, discovery, and impact remain at the heart of why we do this work. (She didn’t mention a hedgehog model but I couldn’t help thinking about it.)

Patience is rarely easy for us even though research requires plenty of it. We are trained to answer questions, gather data, solve problems, and share what we learn we can move along to the next important question. We are still making great impact! Researchers are continuing to ask critical scientific questions. Staff colleagues continue to support research excellence. Dedicated students and trainees continue to impress us. And together, we will continue moving forward one abstract, one proposal, one partnership, and, eventually, one long-awaited funding announcement at a time.

As we look ahead, I’ll leave you with P-Cubed: Perspective, Patience, and Progress. We need all three right now and I see evidence of them every day across our school.

Congratulations to all those featured in this month’s newsletter. Thank you for all you do!

Best,

Daniela



UPDATES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM OUR OFFICE

So far in FY 2026, the ASPH has...

275

Grant Awards

\$42.5 M

in Research Funding

611

Publications

- **Publications** - The ASPH had 66 new publications in [April](#) and 56 new publications in [May](#). This brings our total for FY 2026 to 611 new scholarly papers.
- **The USC Research Computing DataHub** is a central storage resource for medium-term storage of data from active research projects. The [DataHub](#) is an enterprise-level shared storage platform located in the University data center and supported and managed by the Research Computing group. Researchers may request up to one terabyte (1TB) of research data storage on the Research DataHub for free. Additional storage is available for a nominal fee of \$25/terabyte/year
- **The CGI hub** invites applications for the *Propel Research Mentorship Program*, which supports faculty members who are new to the federal grants application process, or are looking to pivot to a new federal funding agency. For full details, click [here](#).
- **The Prisma Health Seed Grant call for applications** has been released. Applications are due August 21, 2026. For full details, click [here](#).
- **News from NIH/Federal Agencies** - the NIH has shared some reminders about how to properly acknowledge foreign components in NIH grant applications, progress reports, and manuscripts. See the full details and guidelines [here](#).
- **The Federal Office of Management and Budget** has posted a [report](#) regarding proposed revisions to the guidance for Federal Financial Assistance. There is a public comment period open through July 13.
- **BioRender users** - there are some upcoming webinars that may help you enhance your data visualizations. Check out the list [here](#).
 - Don't have a bioRender subscription? The ASPH has one you can use! Email Ally Hucek (fhucek@email.sc.edu) to learn more.

STUDENT RESEARCH POSTER CONTEST

Submissions are paused for the summer and will resume in Fall of 2026. Stay tuned for the updated submission form.



Undergraduate Student Winner: May 2026

Riley Smith - Biology major

Infrastructure and Inclusion: Examining the Prevalence and Severity of Sidewalk Feature son Urban Accessibility for Individuasl with Visual and Motor Disabilities.

View Riley's poster [here](#).

Graduate Student Winner: May 2026

Naomi Higgins - Master's student in Epidemiology

West Nile Virus Surveillance in Richland County, South Carolina: Monitoring Mosquito Populations to Inform Public Health Response

View Naomi's poster [here](#).



OFFICE OF RESEARCH STAFF SPOTLIGHT: KIM MCMAHILL

Grants Administrator and Pre-Award Coordinator

Kim joined the Office of Research in 2019, initially serving in a temporary role before becoming a full-time employee. Today, she wears two hats as both a Pre-Award Grant Administrator and Office Manager. In her pre-award role, she reviews and approves proposals, progress reports, supplements, and other submissions through USCeRA and sponsor portals, helping ensure applications move smoothly through the process. As

Office Manager, no two days are alike. Whether responding to unexpected requests, coordinating office needs, or supporting colleagues, Kim approaches each task with flexibility and a willingness to help wherever needed.

One of Kim's favorite aspects of her work is the opportunity to keep learning. "I most enjoy pre-award as something always comes through that challenges me and keeps me learning new things," she shared. Outside of work, she enjoys cheering on her grandchildren at sporting events and theater performances, as well as gardening and traveling. Kim also loves exploring new hobbies and has tried everything from indoor skydiving to painting, pottery, crochet, and knitting - always eager to take on her next creative adventure!

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT-FACULTY RESEARCH MATCHING SURVEY

Undergraduate students - please fill out [this interest survey](#) if you would like to get involved with ASPH research initiatives. Once completed, the OoR will help you explore opportunities and connect to potential mentors.

- If you would like resume help prior to submitting your request, email Olivia Burnitz (rutledgo@mailbox.sc.edu) to set up an appointment.

Faculty members - are you interested in being added or removed from this survey? Email Olivia Burnitz (rutledgo@mailbox.sc.edu) for assistance.

ASPH POSTDOCTORAL GRANT RECIPIENTS

Congratulations to Drs. Nick Yell and Josh Culverhouse on receiving the 2026 Postdoctoral Fellow Research Grants!



Nicholas (Nick) Yell, PhD

USC Rural Health Research Center

Center for Applied Research and Evaluation

Project Title: Registered Nurse Vacancy Trends and Associations Between 2012 and 2024 in United States Hospitals.

Josh Culverhouse, PhD

Arnold Healthy Kids Initiative

Project Title: How Smartphone Use Patterns Relate to Sleep, Stress, and Physical Inactivity.



A HEDGEHOG STORY: THE BRIE LAB

Hedgehog Fun Fact: There are 15 different species of hedgehogs, found across Europe, Asia, and Africa.

The [Hedgehog Model](#) explains how great organizations succeed by focusing on the intersection of three things: **what they are deeply passionate about, what they can be the best in the world at, and what sustains and supports their work.** Recently, the OoR asked the team at the BRIE (Behavioral Research in Eating) Lab to reflect on their "why" using this model. Here's what they had to say.



THE BRIE LAB

Led by **Dr. Brie Turner-McGrievy**, the BRIE (Behavioral Research in Eating) Lab is housed within the Department of Health Promotion, Education, and Behavior. The team researches innovative ways to help people improve their nutrition and prevent chronic disease, with a special focus on mobile health and digital monitoring, as well as plant-based diets to support lasting health behavior change.

What are we passionate about?

For the BRIE Lab, research begins and ends with people. Team members repeatedly emphasized the value of working "in the community for the community" and the opportunity to connect directly with individuals seeking to improve their health.

What excites the team most is seeing research translate into meaningful change. Whether it is helping participants adopt healthier eating habits, reduce their risk of chronic disease, reverse a prediabetes diagnosis, or simply feel more empowered in their health journey, the impact is tangible and motivating.

The group is especially passionate about addressing health disparities and ensuring that evidence-based nutrition programs reach populations that have historically faced barriers to health information and care. Team members are motivated by questions such as how to support sustainable behavior change, how technology can be leveraged to promote healthier lifestyles, and how nutrition interventions can be made more accessible and culturally relevant.

One team member captured this passion simply: "Changing nutritional habits can be extremely difficult, but when it happens, lives can be transformed."

What can we be the best at?

The BRIE Lab's strength lies in its ability to bring together nutrition science, behavioral intervention design, community engagement, and digital health. Team members described the lab as operating at the intersection of behavioral nutrition, technology, and practical public health solutions.

A defining feature of the lab's work is its emphasis on translation and implementation. The focus is not only on discovering what works, but on understanding how healthy behaviors can be adopted and sustained in everyday life. Social Cognitive Theory serves as a guiding framework for many of their interventions, stressing hands-on learning, goal setting, and social support to help participants achieve meaningful change.

The BRIE Lab has also developed expertise in plant-based dietary approaches, mixed-methods research, and technology-based interventions. As one team member noted, the lab has "a strong instinct for identifying where behavior science and emerging technology intersect before it becomes mainstream."



What sustains and supports our research?

Community partnerships are at the heart of the BRIE Lab's success. Team members, community health workers, healthcare organizations, restaurants, and other local partners all play essential roles in making the research possible.

The lab's work addresses some of the most pressing public health challenges facing communities today, including obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and other chronic conditions. Through NIH-funded research and collaborations with organizations such as PRISMA, FoodShare, and other community-based partners, the team develops and evaluates programs designed to improve health outcomes through sustainable lifestyle change.

Importantly, the impact extends beyond individual participants. Community organizations gain new resources and knowledge, local businesses benefit from partnerships, and research findings contribute to broader conversations about nutrition policy and public health practice. BRIE Lab research has even been cited in national guidance documents, including the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

The team's vision for the future is one of healthier communities, reduced chronic disease burden, and broader access to practical, evidence-based nutrition strategies. By empowering individuals with the tools and confidence to make informed choices, the BRIE Lab aims to create lasting improvements in health and quality of life.

If captured in a single sentence, the group's Hedgehog Concept is:

The BRIE Lab exists at the intersection of behavioral nutrition, community engagement, and innovative health technologies. Their work bridges the gap between knowing what is healthy and helping people make those behaviors sustainable in everyday life.



UPCOMING EVENTS

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

2026 Research Core Fair

September 18, 2026

Pastides Alumni Center

Find more information and register [here](#).

OFFICE OF RESEARCH MEETINGS

Brewing Success - Business/Grant/HR Manager Breakfast

October 9 and December 11, 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM

DISC 503 (Office of Research Suite)

Chew on This - Business/Grant/HR Manager Brown Bag Lunch and Learn

September 3 and November 5, 1:15 - 2:30 PM

DISC 259

UPCOMING CONFERENCES

South Carolina Research Administration Conference - "Building Expertise, Strengthening Community"

September 24-25, 2026 at Russell House

Find more info [here](#).

LEWIS-BURKE ASSOCIATES

Lewis-Burke Associates Federal Grant Update Calls for ASPH Faculty and Grants Staff

[June 24th](#) at 1 PM

Click date for meeting link

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS AND RESOURCES FROM UNIVERSITY OFFICES

Additional updates, reminders, and resources you won't want to miss.

UPDATES & REMINDERS

- The **ASPH OoR** has updated the [budget template](#) to reflect increased insurance rates. Make sure you use the new version when you create a project budget.
- The **boilerplate** document for the ASPH can be found [here](#).
- The ASPH has a **BioRender subscription** available for use! To be added to the BioRender subscription, please contact Ally Hucek (fhucek@email.sc.edu).

UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

- **The VPR office** has created resources to help with the new requirements for the NIH Common Forms. Check out the [step-by-step guide](#) for linking your ORCID iD with eRA Commons, My NCBI, and SciNcv. There are also [on-demand videos](#) available to help walk you through the steps outlined in the guide.

- **Research and Grant Development Services** has guidance available on how to apply for [limited submissions](#). Limited submission opportunities are often relayed in [RESDEV emails](#) from the VPR's office.
 - **The VPR's Research and Training Education Services** office provides comprehensive resources on USC grant processes. There is an especially useful [video on hiring RGP's](#) available for your reference.
 - **Research security training update** - [research security training](#) is required every year. Previously, CITI certificates generated for refresher training indicated that certification was valid for three years, however this was a system error and training will need to be completed each year. Please make sure you stay up to date on your training. You should receive reminder emails at 90, 60, and 30 days out from your certificate expiring.
 - **The University Libraries'** [GitHub page](#) contains a repository of notebooks, code, and tutorials that can help researchers or students get acquainted with new tools. The notebooks support many dimensions of the research process including data analysis, visualization, and machine learning.
 - **USC Libraries** has launched an AI-focused newsletter for the USC community. [AI updates for USC researchers](#) is a concise digest of recent developments in AI, curated by [Heather Heckman](#). Subscribe (click the Subscribe button in the upper right of the page) to receive it directly in your inbox.
 - **USC Libraries** now offers access to **Candid Search** (formerly called Foundation Directory) an enhanced fundraising and grant platform that builds upon the capabilities of Foundation Directory. This platform offers more comprehensive resources for planning, research, and implementation. USC Columbia-affiliated users can access [Candid Search](#) directly or through the Libraries' [database collection](#).
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Pam Gillam and Daniela Friedman at the Women's Leadership Institute 2026



ASPH Staff at the annual NCURA conference in Myrtle Beach, SC.

Do you have an item you'd like featured in the next edition of *Research in Action*? Fill out [this form](#) to get connected with our team!



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