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Georgia Southern's Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health secures \$248,000 grant

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Funded study looks at rural, underserved populations, will guide state, federal health policies

Faculty in Georgia Southern University's Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health (JPHCOPH) have secured a \$248,000, two-year grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the nation's largest philanthropy dedicated solely to health.

This project will be funded as part of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Research in Transforming Health and Health Care Systems program, which seeks to build the evidence base on the potential effects of policies or policy changes intended to transform health.

"This grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation presents the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health the opportunity to collaborate with the WellCare Community Connections program in order to evaluate Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) and the impact of these determinants on rural and underserved populations," stated JPHCOPH Interim Dean Stuart H. Tedders, Ph.D. "Investments in SDOH are life-changing and this is an opportunity to assess these investments by measuring the impact on the health and lives of those served. Providing an objective evaluation has the opportunity to strengthen and guide health policy at the federal and state levels."

Grant co-principal investigators Samuel Opoku, Ph.D., and Charles Owens will work with Bettye Apenteng, Ph.D., Linda Kimsey, Ph.D., Center for Public Health Practice and Research Assistant Director Angie Peden, Bill Mase, Dr.P.H., and Robert Vogel, Ph.D., all from the JPHCOPH, to assess the impact of contractual mandates and incentives in encouraging Medicaid managed care organizations (MCOs) to address both the medical and social needs of enrollees. They will compare states that have adopted such strategies with those that have not.

The study is a cross-sector study that will address its research questions in two phases, using a combination of primary and secondary data and a mixed-methods research approach. Phase I will utilize qualitative telephone interviews with leadership or subject-matter experts from MCOs in eight states (Illinois, Hawaii, New Jersey, New York, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky and South Carolina). Phase II will assess the impact of state-specific variations in policy implementation.

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