

# 2020: TCRC Annual Review

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JANUARY 2021

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TISCH COLLEGE COMMUNITY RESEARCH CENTER



**Tufts**  
UNIVERSITY

Jonathan M. Tisch  
College of Civic Life

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# Welcome

Ben Echevarría and Penn Loh,  
TCRC Steering Committee co-chairs

In hindsight, 2020 was a remarkable, exhausting, and trying year for TCRC and our partners in communities and at Tufts. The pandemic and reckoning around structural racism and violence against Black lives made it even more clear to us why TCRC is so needed. The deep relationships with our host communities help ensure that our work in the academy is grounded in the realities of the places that we are a part of. Our community partners call out the best in us at Tufts to work with them to coproduce knowledge and research to address our most pressing needs.

Looking back, we said goodbye to TCRC founder and friend, Doug Brugge. This led us on a new path for the future of TCRC. We thank Dean Alan Solomont, Associate Dean Diane Ryan, and Tisch College for their support and leadership during this transition, which led us to hiring TCRC's first Director, Elaine Donnelly. Elaine comes with a wealth of knowledge and experience that will only enhance the work. We are optimistic, having navigated everything 2020 threw our way, that even bigger and better things are on the horizon for TCRC.

## A reflection on year one and looking ahead

*Elaine K. Donnelly, Director of TCRC*

Reflecting on my first year as part of the TCRC team, it is with a mix of gratitude and anticipation. This time last year was a whirlwind of introductions. Yet whether meeting with someone in their living room or driving out to Grafton, I met colleagues wholly invested in community research that explores justice-oriented questions. A few months in, this work was suddenly curtailed by the pandemic shutdown. What a strange time to build new relationships... and yet TCRC connections have continued to grow.

Above all, I am thankful to everyone who has shared their time and knowledge to think about how to move forward. In 2020, TCRC supported new research, hosted discussions, wrote proposals and received funding, contributed to articles, and -- all the while -- connected with more and more people who uplift community knowledge through research and partnership.

We have an ambitious year ahead, building on 2020 and the important work that came before. Thank you for making these goals both aspirational and achievable.

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# About Tisch College Community Research Center

## Mission and Values

The Tisch College Community Research Center (TCRC) is a resource and champion for community-engaged scholarship. With an emphasis on community participatory and action research, TCRC assistance to community-university research partnerships includes: grantmaking, visibility, technical assistance, and networking with other researchers, partners, and projects.

## Background

The Tisch College Community Research Center (originally the Tufts University Community Research Center) was founded in 2004 to encourage, develop, and expand civically engaged research partnerships between Tufts University and neighboring communities. Funded by and housed at Tisch College, “the idea to form the center grew out of a faculty fellowship at the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service and gained traction through faculty and community representative support and funding from Tisch College,” (Martinez et al. 2013). Originally coordinated by former Tufts faculty Doug Brugge and continuing in this mission today, TCRC centers its work on improving the quality, quantity, visibility, and impact of community-engaged research, especially participatory research collaborations that address critical social, environmental, and economic justice concerns.

***“By linking academic researchers with community partners, the TCRC attempts to promote research that generates new knowledge and supports the work of community stakeholders,” (Martinez et al., 2013).***

TCRC works across all Tufts schools and supports partnerships with communities in Massachusetts, with a special focus on neighboring communities of Boston Chinatown, Medford, Somerville, Grafton/Worcester, and Boston Fenway area neighborhoods. These collaborations reflect the center’s foundational premise of building equitable and mutually beneficial community-university partnerships. From TCRC’s bylaws, reorganized in 2015, TCRC’s goal is “to become a dynamic, productive part of the university that brings one of the greatest strengths of the university, its research capacity, to bear on the problems faced by communities. In doing so, we also bring together two of the strategic goals at Tufts, civic engagement and research. We also hope to contribute to addressing issues of social and economic injustice.”

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## To accomplish this, TCRC takes a multi-pronged approach that includes:

- Research support, particularly grantmaking for promising new research projects
- Increased visibility of community-Tufts collaborative research, especially CBPR and PAR, through written media and presentations
- Lowering barriers to community-university research partnerships through relationship building and community-based participatory research resources
- Support for the participatory and action research field by analyzing and highlighting its positive impact on both communities and student learning
- Building out the network of community participatory and action research champions both at Tufts and in partner communities

## TCRC in 2020

Over the past year, TCRC has built upon its 2018 strategic planning process in several ways.

- **Infrastructure**
  - **New director:** In December 2019, TCRC hired a new part-time director, Elaine K. Donnelly, Ph.D., to support the center's growth. Initial priorities have included updating processes and operations and developing plans to improve TCRC's programs and visibility. Moving forward, the team looks to lay a financial foundation to sustain TCRC's work while also continue to build its existing community of community participatory and action research champions.
  - **Systems review:** TCRC grantmaking has transitioned over the years, from how RFPs are disseminated to how funding is allocated in the Tufts financial system. Our 2020 operations have benefitted by learning from TCRC's twelve years of grantmaking as well as from colleagues at CTSI and other organizations.
- **Visibility and accountability**
  - **2020 TCRC Review:** This report is a sample of TCRC's emphasis on visibility and on creating a traceable and centralized archive of TCRC work.
  - **Newsletter:** Launched in November 2020, TCRC is compiling quarterly newsletters to share our news, upcoming events, and connect with others in the participatory and action research community on a regular basis.
  - **Drawing on TCRC supported research:** Learning from previous and current grantees and partners, TCRC collaborates with Tisch Communications to share highlights and findings. Examples include [Tufts Daily](#) and [Tisch College News](#).
  - **Articles:** In August, TCRC's proposal, in collaboration with the Center for Community Research and Engagement (UMass) and the Chase Center for State Policy (UMaine), was accepted for a special issue in the *Journal for Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* on CBPR strengths during crisis periods like COVID. The final article was submitted for a June 2021 release.

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- **Student support**

- **Research presentations:** In 2020, TCRC began co-hosting student community research panels, in partnership with the Tufts Office for Scholar Development. The first event, held online in the summer of 2020, explored “Research and/as Activism.” A four-person panel highlighted student research related to racial/ethnic identity, embedded bias in artificial intelligence, policing, and first-generation college students. Building from this pilot, subsequent student research panels discussed themes of “Antiracist Community Research in the Arts” and “Pushing Academic Boundaries with Community Research.” Student researchers from political science, media studies, child development, computer science, psychology, and other disciplines discussed their community research experiences. Spring 2021 events are coming.
- **Grantmaking:** In Spring 2020, TCRC continued the TCRC Student Microgrant program (initiated in 2018). Three students were awarded \$300 each to support their research through Tufts Medical School, Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Development and Human Study, and Tufts University Prison Initiative at Tisch College.

- **Community-university partnerships and research**

- **SEED Grants:** The signature program of TCRC, SEED grants were awarded to three promising research projects based out of Somerville, Boston, and Lowell, Massachusetts, totaling \$36,000. These projects demonstrate a commitment to equitably co-created knowledge to impact immigrant health and education, transportation infrastructure policy, and cross-generation cultural exchange.
- **Ongoing assistance:** TCRC strives to be a go-to resource for community engaged research, and is responsive to ongoing requests for assistance, whether networking with potential partners or providing feedback on grant proposals. With an open door and community-building approach, TCRC’s reputation as a community research champion can continue to grow.

- **Sustainability and growth**

- **AmeriCorps community action research:** Penn Loh (UEP, TCRC co-chair) and DSNI incorporated TCRC into a Corporation for National and Community Service grant award. This project examines how civic engagement can strengthen capacity for community control over land use and economic development in Boston’s Dudley neighborhood. TCRC’s role is supported with \$5,000 to strengthen comparative assessments related to COVID impacts.
- **Tufts Springboard:** TCRC continues to actively seek funding opportunities to support and grow our work. In October 2020, we submitted a Tufts Springboard proposal that was awarded \$10,000 in January 2021. This initiative focuses on building out and sharing antiracist practices and resources in community participatory and action research.
- **AmeriCorps VISTA:** Currently staffed with a half-time director and with the potential to accomplish even more, TCRC, in partnership with the Tisch Office of Community Partnerships and supported by Tisch College, applied for a full-time AmeriCorps VISTA through Campus Compact. This position will help build and implement the planning from summer/fall 2020, including aspects of the Springboard project and developing TCRC as a resource hub.

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## Steering committee overview

TCRC's steering committee brings together community leaders and practitioners with university faculty, administrators, and students to guide the center's work. The shared decision-making culture is uncommon and representative of the kinds of collaborative research approaches that TCRC supports.

Currently, the steering committee has 15 members, with two co-chairs (one faculty and one community partner). This includes representatives from Somerville, Medford, and Chinatown as well as Tufts faculty, students, and administrators across schools and disciplines. In 2015, TCRC steering committee approved bylaws regarding membership with seats for Tufts faculty, community representatives, Tufts students, Tisch College, Tufts Professor Emeritus, and a Tufts administrator. The bylaws also include community seats for Boston Chinatown, Somerville, and Medford. The committee meets 4-5 times annually, with smaller working groups to review proposals, collect data, and prepare materials as needed.

In Spring 2020, three members ended their tenure on the TCRC steering committee. Tufts Emeritus Faculty Susan Ostrander stepped down after helping the center become a robust community research advocate since nearly its inception. Both Chu Huang and Jessica Wong Camhi represented Boston's Chinatown neighborhood and contributed valuable insight as TCRC partners for several years. We are deeply thankful to all three partners for their positive influence on TCRC's stability and growth.

In the coming year, we anticipate building out our steering committee to represent TCRC's growth, as well as solidifying new ways for community members, faculty, and students to be involved as advisors and affiliates.

### 2020-2021 Steering Committee

Ben Echevarría, *Co-chair, TCRC; The Welcome Project*

Penn Loh, *Co-Chair, TCRC; Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning*

Georgiana Chevry, *Bunker Hill Community College; Commissioner of Medford Housing Authority*

Annie Chin-Louie, *ADAPT*

Rocco DiRico, *Tufts Government and Community Relations*

Elaine K. Donnelly, *TCRC*

Kendra Field, *Department of History, Department of Studies in Race, Colonialism, and Diaspora*

Kerri Greenidge, *Department of American Studies, Department of Studies in Race, Colonialism, and Diaspora*

J. David Gibbs, *Community Action Agency of Somerville*

Alicia Hunt, *City of Medford*

Shirley Mark, *Tisch College of Civic Life*

Alex Pirie, *Immigrant Services Provider Group/Health*

Ellin Reisner, *Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership*

Allen Rutberg, *Tufts Center for Animals and Public Policy*

Diane Ryan, *Tisch College of Civic Life*

Sumeeta Srinivasan, *Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning*

Ninian Stein, *Environmental Studies*

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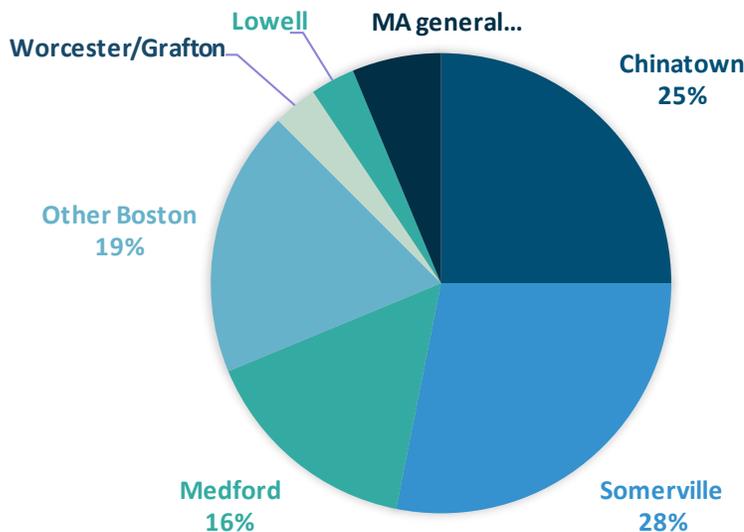
## SEED Grants

Since its beginnings, the Tisch College Community Research Center has supported community engaged research, which produces valuable scholarship and knowledge useful to the community. Its flagship program is a seed grant award that assists community-centered research between Tufts and nearby communities. These have a special but not exclusive emphasis on neighborhoods in Somerville, Medford, greater Worcester/Grafton, and Boston’s Chinatown area. With Tufts’ expanding partnership with the MFA School, TCRC’s reach will also extend into Boston’s Fenway and Mission Hill neighborhoods as well. Likewise, priority is given to research focused on redressing issues of social inequity. Since 2008, TCRC has provided over \$250,000 in grants to 28 projects, with awards ranging from \$4000 to \$16,000.

### Geographic distribution

TCRC SEED grant awards are reflected geographically across neighboring communities and eastern Massachusetts.<sup>1</sup> While the priority has been on communities that abut Tufts campuses, TCRC’s reach has extended to other areas in Massachusetts as well. In 2018, the first grant was made to a Worcester-based project in collaboration with the Grafton campus. In 2020, the first grant was made to a research partnership based in Lowell. Each year, new community partners are engaged in TCRC supported work, helping to grow our larger network of community participatory and action research champions.

### DISTRIBUTION OF SEED PROJECTS 2008 - 2020



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<sup>1</sup> Some projects include more than one location.

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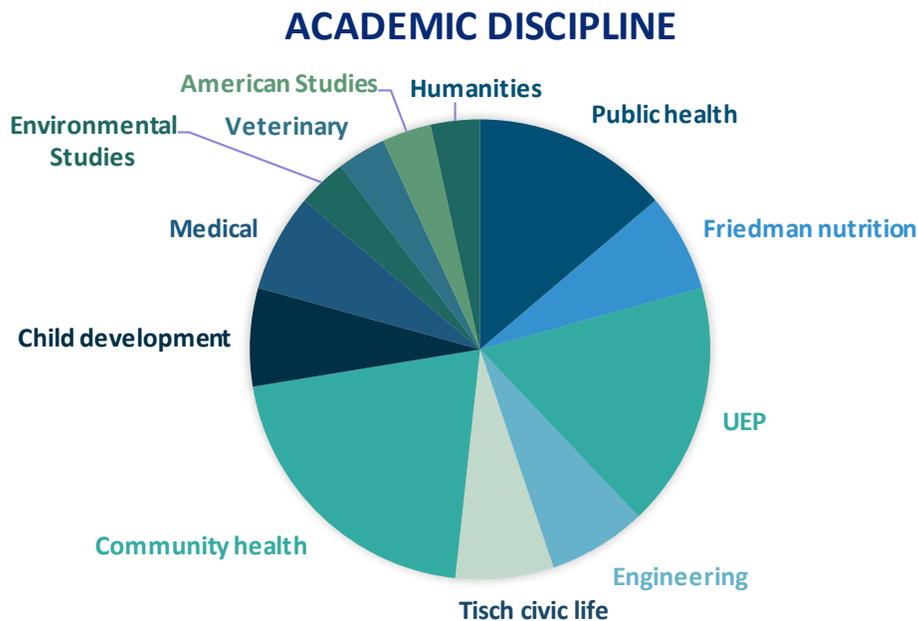
## Academic discipline distribution

TCRC began with public health projects more than twelve years ago and has since expanded across academic disciplines, including:

- Public health
- Community health
- Environmental studies
- Humanities and Fine Arts
- Engineering
- Social sciences including American studies, sociology, political science
- Veterinary
- Tisch Civic Studies

**Since 2008, the distribution spans nearly every campus at Tufts, with a heavy emphasis in the College of Arts and Sciences and Tufts Medical School.<sup>2</sup>**

Over time, TCRC has reached more departments and disciplines, showcasing the wide range of applicability for CBPR and related research. While traditionally CBPR is most visible in public and community health research, TCRC grantmaking over the years demonstrates its value across many sectors. In 2018, the first grant to the Cummings Veterinary School was made. In 2020, we awarded TCRC's second grant to a humanities faculty member (from the Music Department). Moving forward, for example, we anticipate engaging with the Museum School of Fine Arts as well as the new Tisch College Public Humanities program.



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<sup>2</sup> Some projects include multiple faculty across departments and schools.

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In its early days, TCRC helped launch the CAFEH<sup>3</sup> public health project led by Doug Brugge and community partners including Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership, Chinatown Progressive Association, and Boston Public Health Commission. Many early projects focused on public and environmental health. Since then, TCRC grantmaking process expanded into other disciplines. For example, in 2017, TCRC supported a humanities-focused project for the *These Words* exhibition and research in Chinatown. In 2018, TCRC awarded its first grant to the Cummings Veterinary School to support elderly pet owners in Worcester public housing. By investing seed funds in these and other projects, TCRC continues to grow its footprint both geographically and across disciplines.

The impact of this seed funding has been profound over the past decade. For example, findings from TCRC funded research have informed policy and further research around obesity ([link](#)), watershed protections ([link](#)) and City of Boston library investments ([link](#)).

TCRC continues to support innovative and compelling community participatory and action research that can provide meaningful findings and lead to broader policy, practice, and research opportunities. In 2019, three seed grants were awarded and, despite the COVID pandemic, two of these were able to successfully continue and complete their research plans, with the potential for broader research opportunities.

## Update on 2019 SEED Grants

### Immigrant Families and Somerville Schools: 2019-2020

A 2019 TCRC SEED research grant, “Immigrant Families and Somerville Schools,” sought to build on a collaboration with the Welcome Project and students in a Tufts community health CBPR course in Spring 2019. The research centered on learning from immigrant parents in the Somerville public school system as well as other school stakeholders (preschool, nonprofit preschool, charter, Catholic school staff, and city leadership). While the original goal was to create immigrant educational scorecards (reports on immigrants’ experiences within the district), the COVID-19 shutdown suddenly closed Somerville schools and The Welcome Project programs, while Tufts classes moved online.

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<sup>3</sup> Community Assessment of Freeway Exposure and Health

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*What does a community-based participatory research project do now?*

Co-PIs Prof. Shalini Tendulkar (Community Health), Kenia Alfaro (The Welcome Project), and students in the class provided insight on how to navigate these unforeseen changes in CBPR research. They shared these reflections with TCRC (see [article](#)), particularly lessons on how partners learn from each other and find innovative ways to collaborate and stay true to their research goals. Not only were students able to analyze and produce a baseline pre-COVID report, but they were able to focus more on how this information could best be shared and made accessible across the community.

**“[CBPR’s] inherent flexibility is an asset in this moment. We can see more clearly how we actually do research. We can think about it without the things we’ve taken for granted, reevaluate what we do and what barriers exist: How do we really do this?”**

*Kenia Alfaro, The Welcome Project*

### **African American Heritage Trail Project: 2019-2021**

TCRC funding supports community-based research on African American and diasporic histories of Medford, Massachusetts. Archival and oral history work is being conducted by a team of researchers at Tufts University Center for the Study of Race and Democracy and the African American Trail Project, led by Prof. Kendra Field (History) and Prof. Kerri Greenidge (American Studies), in conjunction with partners at the Royall House and Slave Quarters and the West Medford Community Center. This project provides archival research on the history of African-descended people across Medford, from the 17th century to the present, as well as the collection of oral histories and genealogical work drawn from these two historic Medford sites and surrounding communities.

Although this SEED grant was awarded in Spring 2019, the funding was allocated in Feb 2020. Since then, the project has been moving forward successfully, supporting an expanding partnership with the Royall House and Slave Quarters and the West Medford Community Center. We look forward to a forthcoming final report and learning from this experience in early 2021.

### **Beyond Maria: Community Resilience, Systems of Care, and the Experiences of Puerto Rican Families in Massachusetts, 2019 -2020**

Community-engaged research not only encounters barriers like a pandemic, but challenges can arise when project leaders change and successive challenges (such as in this instance, combined natural and political disasters) impede progress. Unfortunately, this was the case for Beyond Maria and, subsequently, TCRC is reallocating this funding to another community project in the coming year.

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## 2020 – 2021 SEED Grant Awards

In Spring 2020, TCRC received a competitive pool of proposals that shared a wide range of compelling community focused research. The evaluation subcommittee, comprised of steering committee members representing both community partners and Tufts faculty, selected three SEED grants. These awards were based on criteria such as: the relevance of the research question to community needs, clear evidence of equitable research partnerships including through the budget document, and research design and overall quality. This RFP attracted high-quality proposals that spanned a wide range of disciplines including engineering, child development, humanities, public health, urban and environmental policy and planning, and fine arts. The 2020-21 SEED Grants were awarded to:



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### Assessing the Impact of COVID-19 on the Health of Brazilian Immigrants (Somerville)

**Partners:** Brazilian Women’s Group, Somerviva, City of Somerville, Prof. Jennifer Allen (Community Health), Prof. Christiane Soares (Romance Studies); **Grant award:** \$12,000

#### Summary:

The goal of this proposal is to assess the impact of COVID-19 on Brazilian immigrants residing in Tufts’ host communities. Brazilians make up a large and growing proportion of immigrants to the U.S. overall, and Massachusetts is home to the second-largest Brazilian immigrant population in the country. Many Brazilians reside in Somerville, Medford, Cambridge, and Allston/Brighton. Over the past year, Tufts faculty (Allen, Soares) have partnered with organizations serving Brazilian immigrants (City of Somerville, Somerviva, and the Brazilian Women’s Group) to better understand health issues, priorities, and service gaps for these communities. Findings from our research conducted over the past year revealed that mental health, occupational safety, and domestic violence were critical issues affecting the Brazilian community even before COVID-19. It is likely that the profound economic impact of the pandemic—coupled with the shelter-in-place advisory, social distancing, and changes in immigration policies—has only exacerbated these issues. To address the critical need for information and data, we developed a community-based participatory study will seek to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on these issues, as well as the factors that impact COVID-19 testing, diagnosis and treatment among Brazilian immigrants in Tufts’ host communities.

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## **Gender Fair Mobility: Closing the Gender Data Gap Towards an Equitable Urban Redevelopment (Boston)**

**Partners:** Livable Streets Alliance and Prof. Rebecca Shakespeare (UEP), María de la Luz Lobos Martínez

**Grant award:** \$12,000

### **Summary:**

This project seeks to understand the mobility limitations that stem from gender inequities and gendered experiences on streets. The research examines how gender-disaggregated data can reveal mobility and design factors that specifically address the needs and experiences of women and non-binary people by generating gender-specific participatory processes and data analysis that elevate the experiences of those communities. Looking to understand how to incorporate a broader sense of gender-based accessibility within Boston, the research focuses on the City's redevelopment of two major corridors, Columbia Road, and Tremont Street. To understand the perceptions of women and non-binary people of traveling on these corridors, both collectively and individually, this research combines surveys, interviews, sketch mapping, and geospatial analysis to identify spatial configurations that impact livability. This research seeks to define and characterize factors important to disaggregated gender groups, proposing guidelines to produce new urban configurations that grant the right to mobility at any time and place to women and gender-nonconforming people. A collaboration led by Livable Streets Alliance's María de la Luz Lobos Martínez and Dr. Rebecca Shakespeare, this research seeks to inform neighborhood redevelopment through community-based collaborative processes, incorporating neighborhood ambassadors and Tufts students.

## **Engaging Memory and Knowledge Transmission through Music in the Cambodian American Community (Lowell)**

**Partners:** Angkor Dance Troupe, Cambodian Vintage Music Archive, and Prof. Stéphanie Khoury (Music)

**Grant award:** \$12,000

### **Summary:**

How does one acquire knowledge of a given musical genre when most artists and most documentation disappeared decades ago? How does one expand a musical genre if one cannot fully experience it? This is the situation that Cambodian-American youth encounter when looking at the mid-20th century popular music movement, a movement that is considered emblematic of Cambodian modernity and cultural prosperity. This gap in musical experience is one of the consequences of the 1970s Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia, during which most musicians, singers, and dancers died while traces of their art were destroyed. Yet this music is omnipresent in Cambodia and the diaspora through the proliferation of bootleg copies of limited sound archives and the nostalgia of the past that is associated with it. This collaborative research explores the meaning of Cambodian popular musical heritage for refugees and their families in the Cambodian American community of Lowell. The project is composed of two complementary initiatives: (1) working with Cambodian American youth in Lowell to collect their elders' narratives and memories of this music, and (2) supporting artists to reconstitute musical materials in order to facilitate intergenerational performances. Through a collaboration between the Tufts Music Department and the Angkor Dance Troupe, a Cambodian American community-based organization, this research project addresses questions of cultural heritage, collective memory, and creativity in relation to Cambodian pre-war popular music in the diasporic community of Lowell.

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## Spotlight on Students

One of the three “legs” of TCRC’s stakeholder groups are university students. With an eye to supporting the next generation of community researchers and activists, TCRC is focusing its student work on visibility, grantmaking, and technical assistance.

### Research presentations

New in 2020, TCRC started a series of research panels centering student experiences with community-engaged research. In collaboration with Tufts’ Scholar Development Office, the pilot panel in Summer 2020 highlighted how research itself can be a form of activism: “When does community + students + research = activism? What questions are communities asking and how can students collaborate with community partners and help find answers? How can students help turn a spotlight on important community concerns? The panel featured four Tufts undergraduate students



whose interests span identity and language, racism embedded in computer models, voting, re-imagining the Tufts Police Department, and experiences of first-generation students in elite institutions. The students shared their research, considering how it lowers the barrier between conventional research and community activism. This included student posed questions considering “How deeply are you willing to rework your model of the world?” and thinking about what it may mean to question powerful institutions of which we are also a part? Read more about this pilot here: [Community research and/as activism](#)

During Fall 2020, TCRC and the Scholar Development Office co-hosted additional student discussions:

“Antiracist Community Research in the Arts” featured a panel and discussion that explored how community-engaged research in the Fine Arts and Media Studies can highlight important issues using an antiracist lens, considering issues of identity, power, representation in media, and self-reflection.

- Elon Perry-Stiner, Child Study & Human Development, Film & Media Studies, ‘21: “Representation and Portrayal of Marginalized Identities in Mainstream Media”
- Alberto Checa, Fine Arts, ‘21: “Ritualizing the Futile Labor of the Latino Working-Poor Class within the American Landscape”
- Moderator: Julia Proshan, Psychology and Civic Studies, ‘22

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The “Pushing Academic Boundaries with Community Research” panel and discussion considered how community-engaged research can help us understand and help address urgent community concerns while pushing traditional boundaries of academic disciplines.

- Carolina Espinal, Political Science '22:  
Examining Florida’s prison system and its reliance on punitive measures that has disproportionately impacted Black and Latinx populations, specifically racial and ethnic disparities in prisons, the role of education in prison, and offers proposals to confront these ills.
- Patrece Joseph, PhD candidate, Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Study & Human Development:  
Using community-engaged methods to examine the unique health-related beliefs and attitudes of adolescents from marginalized communities (e.g., low-income and/or Black, Latinx) to develop and implement interventions to have positive outcomes on their health.
- Moderator: Rabiya Ismail, Political Science and English '22

These discussions will continue through Spring 2021, sharing student research across community topics and academic disciplines. Learn more about this and other community-engaged student research at <https://tischcollege.tufts.edu/research/tcrc>.

## Student grants

For the 2020-2021 academic year, the Tisch College Community Research Center (TCRC) awarded three TCRC Student Microgrants for research projects that prioritize community engagement and demonstrate promise for positive impact. These were awarded to two graduate students and one undergraduate student working on early STEM education, palliative care, and adult learning. Three students received a total of \$900 to support valuable research with implications for local communities.

## 2020 Microgrant Projects

### **2020 Student Award: Madhu Govind**

#### **Project: Reading, wRiting, aRithmetic, and algoRithms: Bringing the 4 R’s of 21st Century Learning to Kindergarten**

*Proposal:* This project will study an innovative “Coding as Literacy” afterschool curriculum for kindergarten students at the Benjamin Banneker Charter Public School, a Title I school in Cambridge, MA.



Responding to national concerns related to STEM education, “Coding as Literacy” focuses on early childhood to study a kindergarten STEM program. Issues related to coding, computational thinking, and STEM diversity are explored to understand how students’ early experiences shape their STEM learning. Tufts PhD student Madhu Govind, Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Study and Human Development, will facilitate this research under the supervision of Professor Marina Umaschi Bers and in collaboration with the Benjamin Banneker Charter

Public School in Cambridge. Together with the DevTech Research Group, the team includes Banneker School partners Jared Perrine (Director of Innovation, Technology, and Digital Learning) and Barbara Brothers (After School Programs Director). They will study the implementation of an afterschool coding curriculum with kindergarten children, including lesson logs, student work documentation, and observations.

*Progress to date:* Over the Fall 2020, this project was unable to proceed with Banneker Charter School because of constraints related to the pandemic. As an alternative, during the Spring 2021 semester, Madhu Govind is working with a new partner to bring this program to preschool Head Centers in St. Louis, MO. The curriculum consists of 30 half-hour lessons that use the screen-free KIBO robotics kit, are aligned with core content area standards, and culminate in an open-ended robotics project. DevTech researchers will collect data using validated coding assessments; teacher surveys, interviews, and lesson logs; documentation of student work; and classroom observations conducted virtually through Zoom. Findings from this project would be disseminated in peer-reviewed articles and students’ thesis/dissertation work, as well as in public conferences, presentations, and papers. Madhu Govind will facilitate research activities (continuing work with Professor Marina Umaschi Bers) with Head Start partners: Keri Young (Education Coordinator) and Dr. Gwendolyn W. Diggs (Vice President).

### **2020 Student Award: Avery Caz Glover**

#### **Project: Disparities in the Intensity of End-of-life Care between Chinese-American and Caucasian Patients who Die in the Medical ICU at a Tertiary Medical Center**

*Proposal:* This project seeks to understand the disparities in high intensity End-Of-Life care between Chinese-American and Caucasian patients who died in the medical ICU at a major hospital in Boston’s Chinatown.

While culturally-competent and equitable treatment is important for high quality health care, little research exists to help us understand the disparities in end-of-life care for Asian patients in intensive care units, particularly across Chinese communities in the United States. Decision-making is compounded by cultural and linguistic barriers which can contribute to disparities in care. This research examines disparities in end-of-life care between Chinese-American and Caucasian ICU patients who died in Boston’s Chinatown. Building on Tufts Medical student Avery Caz Glover’s work with Dr. Tamara Vesel, which found potential differences in care for Chinese-American stage IV cancer patients, this project includes review of patients who died in the

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medical ICU at Tufts Medical Center, to make comparisons regarding types of treatment, length of stay, readmission rates, and documentation of end-of-life conversations with patients' families. Findings will be shared through existing relationships with the Greater Boston Chinese Golden Age Center to inform discussions on end-of-life care and other healthcare issues, as well as have the potential to inform related ICU practices at Tufts Medical Center.

*Progress to date:* Avery finished data collection and is in the process of data analysis. Preliminary results include:

The TCRC student grant funded my research into disparities in end-of-life treatment and advance care planning between 153 Chinese and 153 Caucasian patients who died in the ICU at Tufts Medical Center (TMC) between 2014-2020. While I will soon be conducting formal statistical testing to determine whether differences are statistically significant, there are a few notable trends. In terms of interventions, Chinese patients tended to receive less hemodialysis and more CPR during their last inpatient ICU stay before death. And in terms of advance care planning, despite similar rates of documentation upon admission, Chinese patients had higher rates of do-not-resuscitate and do-not-intubate orders and less identification of healthcare proxies during their course of stay. Again, while I will perform statistical testing to confirm the statistical significance of these findings, these results will ideally inform policy at TMC and guide further community outreach with the Chinatown community on end-of-life care topics in partnership between the Division of Palliative Care at TMC and the Greater Boston Chinese Golden Age Center (our conversations are currently ongoing and being held through Zoom).

**2020 Student Award: Claudia Guetta**

**Project: Study of the Tufts Educational Re-entry Network (TERN) program of the Tufts University Prison Initiative of Tisch College (TUPIT)**

*Proposal:* This project combines training of student volunteers via LinkedIn and the development/early implementation of an assessment to understand the impact of the MyTERN pilot on formerly incarcerated people and on the Tufts student volunteer instructors.

Annually, hundreds of thousands of formerly incarcerated individuals return to their communities. They face significant obstacles in housing, employment, health, educational attainment, self-efficacy and self-confidence (Petersilia, 2003) which result in more than 75% of people released from state prisons being reincarcerated within 5 years (Davis et al., 2013).

The Tufts University Prison Initiative of Tisch College (TUPIT)'s college-in-prison program has begun critical rehabilitation work inside state prisons, and has developed a re-entry component called TERN (Tufts Educational Re-entry Network), to address the urgent issue of reentry, identified by TUPIT and its directly impacted partners. Led by a strong partnership with individuals with lived experiences of incarceration, including a former inside TUPIT student, TERN is developing an educational program for people who have recently been released from prison, to foster skills and increase employability.

This fall, combined with an inside-out class taught by the TUPIT Program director, MyTERN will provide training for certifications in basic computer proficiency from the Microsoft Office suite on Google Chromebooks -

provided by TERN. This computer proficiency module will be taught by the volunteer TUPIT Student Coordinators who have experience working with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals, under the supervision of the TUPIT-TERN Director, Hilary Binda. Rigorous, trauma-informed re-entry education cultivates intellectual, emotional, and practical skills. We will be studying these components in 1) how they strengthen MyTERN participants' candidacy for meaningful employment; 2) how they result in decreased recidivism rates and the increased health and wellness of people re-entering society after incarceration; and 3) how they impact program teachers, tutors, and Tufts grad and undergrad students at large.

The program and trainings began in October 2020. Student Claudia Guetta shares her thoughts on the experience:

*As a student, teaching assistant, and student coordinator of the Tufts Prison Initiative, I've gotten to learn from and with incarcerated, formerly incarcerated, and civically motivated students. While studying the liberal arts together, we learn that the power of knowledge is in learning "how" to think, not "what" to think. It's not just about gaining knowledge, but empowering people to become active in their society. This kind of learning greatly inspires me, and is something that is often lacking, but necessary, around us. Tisch College fosters this exact kind of learning and exploration, motivating me to pursue this research. I hope to continue to study the intersection of education and incarceration to understand and strengthen this program. Ultimately, the goal is to decrease recidivism, define what meaningful work and employment means to each participant, and increase the health and wellness of those returning from incarceration.*

### **2020 update on 2019 Student Award: Patrece Joseph, Ph.D. candidate**

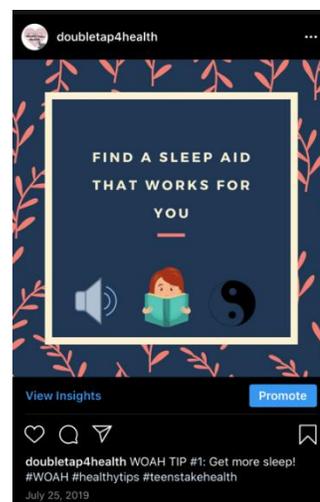
**Project: #DoubleTap4Health, Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Study and Human Development**

#### *Project overview:*

#DoubleTap4Health is a community-based intervention that encourages teen engagement in health behaviors to prevent obesity (e.g., sleep, physical activity, healthy eating, and media use). The activity-based intervention includes five-sessions that (1) teach teens media health literacy skills (the ability to recognize, understand, critique, and apply media-delivered health information to decision-making); (2) delivers practical strategies for teens to engage in the health behaviors and; (3) engages teens in a social media health campaign to share health information and strategies with peers. The intervention was developed based on focus groups with teens from Brookview House.

#### *TCRC-supported implementation and related outcomes:*

With the support of TCRC funds, the program was implemented with a small group of teens in Summer 2019. The findings from the implementation suggest that the intervention has the potential to improve teens' health behaviors: their sugar-sweetened beverage intake, junk foods intake, sedentary behavior, physical activity, and hours of sleep decreased from pre- to post intervention. Also, the teens had positive overall views of the intervention: on average they liked 80% of the activities presented. Because there was a decline in physical activity and sleep, these lessons were revised and will be implemented in a future pilot test.



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## Moving ahead in 2021

Over the coming year, we are focused on growing our participatory and action research community, making the underlying antiracist practices and orientation of CBPR and PAR more explicit, and reinforcing TCRC as a resource for all stakeholders in this work.

In 2021, we will raise TCRC's visibility further. For example, we will revise our presence on the Tisch College website to align with our goals and spotlight grant impact, racial justice resources in CBPR and PAR, and our growing network of partners. Meanwhile, TCRC will continue to highlight the community research work of our partners as well as TCRC's ongoing thought leadership in the field of community participatory and action research, such as with a pending 2021 publication in the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*. Furthermore, TCRC is invested in supporting the next generation of community-engaged scholars. By learning from our student panel discussion series in 2020-2021, with feedback from our microgrant recipients that informs our planning for a Fall 2021 student research cohort, we can develop targeted assistance (networking, technical support, workshops, resources) that is meaningful for both undergraduate and graduate students interested in community research.

We will continue to learn from and expand on this work in collaboration with our 2020-21 grantee partners, impact from previous work that continues to unfold, and through advancing "Antiracism in Community Engaged Research" throughout the year.

With deep gratitude to our steering committee members, TCRC continues to connect with community partners and new potential collaborators. 2021 brings new opportunities to collaborate, including a workshop series to share the knowledge of community-and-university participatory and action researchers and greater engagement in areas such as in the Mission Hill/Fenway neighborhoods near the Tufts School of the Museum of Fine Arts and with community organizations that are located closer to the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine in Grafton. Meanwhile, TCRC will continue to build on its core SEED grant and microgrant programs while also refining related processes and infrastructure, whether that is revising reporting processes, identifying and securing external financial support, or expanding communication opportunities such as this inaugural report itself, a continuous improvement approach promises a lot more to come in 2021.