Obesity Research & Graduate Study at the University of Connecticut

Obesity, while manifested at the individual level, reflects a multitude of drivers that exist at scales from the cell all the way to culture, environments, and policy.

For this reason, the study of obesity is not delegated to a single disciplinary approach. Graduate training at UConn embraces an interdisciplinary perspective on obesity.

Studying Obesity at UConn

While acquiring a specific disciplinary expertise, graduate students can engage more holistically with the full range of approaches to Obesity across the university.

Research Centers

Through the work of our research centers, the University of Connecticut is uniquely positioned as a stronghold for obesity researchers.

Institute for Collaboration on Health, Intervention, and Policy (InCHIP): UConn's InCHIP is an international leader in health and health behavior research with a long held dedication to obesity research.

The Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity: Ranked as one of highest-performing childhood nutrition and health non-profit organizations in the country, The Rudd Center provides a platform for researchers to elevate their work to improve the food environment and public health.

Center for mHealth and Social Media: The mission of the Center is to increase capacity for mHealth and social media research, facilitate industry-academic partnerships, and to become an international leader in the science of technology for health behavior change.

Obesity Related Graduate Programs:

• Agricultural and Resource Economics (Ph.D., M.S.)
• Allied Health Sciences (Ph.D., M.S.)
• Clinical Psychology (Ph.D.)
• Communication (Ph.D., M.A.)
• Human Development and Family Studies (Ph.D., MA)
• Kinesiology (D.P.T., M.S.)
• Nutritional Sciences (Ph.D., M.S.)
• Social Psychology (Ph.D.)
**InCHIP is an interdisciplinary research institute focused on fostering collaborative and innovative research in the areas of health and health behavior.**

**InCHIP Affiliate Services**

- Network with Leading Researchers (e.g. Obesity Research Interest Group)
- Apply for Seed Grant Opportunities
- Professional Development Workshops
- Attend InCHIP Lectures and Events

Any graduate student at UConn is welcome to apply to become an InCHIP Affiliate

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**Obesity Researchers at UConn**

*Interested applicants should contact the individual researcher who matches their interests or the graduate program to which they wish to apply.*

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**Agricultural and Resource Economics (ARE) -** ARE stands at the intersection of applied economics, natural sciences, environmental studies, and public policy.  
(Degrees Offered: MS, PhD; To be eligible for funding, applications must be received by January 15th)

- **Tatiana Andreyeva** PhD (860.380.1014; tatiana.andreyeva@uconn.edu)  
  Research Interests: Obesity and food policy in the U.S.; economic incentives in food choices and diet, with a particular focus on tax policy, federal food assistance programs, and the food environment in child care centers.

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**Allied Health Sciences (AHS) -** Students acquire knowledge and skills to advance understanding of behavioral, social, genetic and environmental determinants of health.  
(Degrees Offered: MS, PhD; For more information, please contact Dr. Valerie B. Duffy (valerie.duffy@uconn.edu))

- **Valerie Duffy,** PhD, RD (860.486.1997; valerie.duffy@uconn.edu)  
  Research Interests: Understanding the variation in chemosensory perception in humans and how this variation influences food flavor, food preference, and food intake as well as investigating the effectiveness of community-based interventions to improve vegetable intake and rates of physical activity.

- **Pouran Faghri,** M.D., M.S., FASCM (860.486.0018; pouran.faghri@uconn.edu)  
  Research Interests: Developing and evaluating cost effective health promotion interventions, and evaluation of worksite health promotion programs (more specifically in high-stress workplaces).

- **Jennifer Harris,** PhD (860.380.1016; jennifer.harris@uconn.edu)  
  Research Interests: Current research focuses on marketing and public health, with an emphasis on effects of food marketing on behaviors, attitudes and motivation in children and adults.

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**InCHIP’s Obesity Research Interest Group**

ORIG is a multidisciplinary network of investigators, affiliates, and students who share a common interest in understanding, preventing, and treating obesity.
Obesity Researchers at UConn

Allied Health Sciences (cont.)

**Tricia Leahey**, PhD (860.486.0083; tricia.leahey@uconn.edu)

Research Interests: Development and evaluation of cost-effective behavioral interventions. Current projects include examining the effects of social networks and financial incentives on weight loss or weight loss maintenance in reduced intensity in-person programs or internet-based dissemination initiatives.

**Jeanne McCaffery**, PhD (860.486.2190; jeanne.mccaffery@uconn.edu)

Research Interests: Gene x environment interaction; application of discoveries in genetics and genomics to obesity and diabetes prevention and treatment. Recent projects include: identification of DNA variation that predicts ability to lose weight with behavior change, characterizing genetic predictors of dietary intake and determining the role of salivary amylase in obesity and diabetes.

**Sherry Pagoto**, PhD (860.486.2945; sherry.pagoto@uconn.edu)

Research Interests: Using social media and technology to deliver evidence-based strategies for the treatment of obesity and prevention of cancer in adults.

**Molly Waring**, PhD (860.486.1446; molly.waring@uconn.edu)

Research Interests: Use of technology and social media for weight management, with a focus on pregnant and post-partum women and parents of young children. Projects include randomized controlled trials to test interventions and observational studies using large national datasets and data from commercial social media platforms.

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Clinical Psychology (PSYC) - The Clinical Psychology Program is one of six divisions within the Department of Psychological Sciences. The program focuses on developing theoretical and empirical knowledge in understanding complex human behaviors.

(Degrees Offered: PhD; Application Deadline: December 1st)

**Amy Gorin**, PhD (860.486.5670; amy.gorin@uconn.edu)

Research Interests: Development of treatment strategies for long-term weight loss and maintenance with an emphasis on motivational and environmental processes that affect weight control. Current studies focus on couples-based approaches to weight management.

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The mission of the UConn Center for mHealth and Social Media is to leverage technology to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals, communities, and the population.

**Programs and Activities**

- Consultation on research design, recruitment, and data analysis for mHealth and online social networking studies
- Mobile application and social media feed-development
- Training opportunities (e.g. conferences, webinars, workshops)

**Facebook**

www.facebook.com/UCONNmHealth/

**Twitter:**

@UCONNmHealth
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Communication (COMM) - The mission of the Department of Communication is to study and teach about communication with areas of specialization that include interpersonal communication, persuasion, communication technology, nonverbal communication, and media effects.

(Degrees Offered: MA, PhD; Rolling Admission (to be eligible for funding, applications must be received by January 1st))

Leslie Snyder, PhD (860.486.4383; leslie.snyder@uconn.edu)
Research Interests: Interpretations and effects (intended and unintended) of mediated messages; communication campaigns, health, international communication, and meta-analysis

Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS) - The Human Development and Family Studies discipline emphasizes diverse ways that persons develop within their social and familial contexts.

(Degrees Offered: MA, PhD; Application Deadline: March 1st (MA); December 15th (PhD)

Kim Gans, PhD (860.486.1228; kim.gans@uconn.edu)
Research Interests: Healthy eating/nutrition; obesity prevention and treatment; community-engaged research; childcare; worksite, school and home-based interventions; low-income and ethnic minority populations; innovative technology for behavior change; food environments/food access; physical activity; translational/dissemination research; health literacy; physician education/training; dietary assessment

Rebecca Puhl, PhD (860.380.1209; rebecca.puhl@uconn.edu)
Research Interests: Bullying, stigma, & discrimination experienced by youth & adults who have obesity; health consequences of weight-based bullying & stigma; interventions and policy strategies to reduce weight-based stigma and discrimination

Marlene Schwartz, PhD (860.380.1211; marlene.schwartz@uconn.edu)
Research Interests: School wellness policies’ & community based interventions’ influences on nutrition & health; how banks & pantries can improve nutritional quality of products

As one of the highest-performing childhood nutrition and nonprofit health organizations in the country, the mission of the Rudd Center is to promote solutions to childhood obesity, poor diet, and weight bias through research and policy

• Conducting Research to inform advocacy and policy
• Supporting evidence-based solutions
• Challenging the status quo
• Holding the food industry, media, government, and others that affect the food environment accountable for their actions

Left to right: Economic Initiatives Director Tatiana Andreyeva, Director Marlene Schwartz, Deputy Director Rebecca Puhl, and Marketing Initiatives Director Jennifer Harris

To learn more about working with Rudd Center Faculty, please visit www.uconnruddcenter.org
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**Kinesiology (KINS)** - The Exercise Science graduate program focuses on training proficient, knowledgeable, and technically experienced leaders in the field of Kinesiology.  
(Degrees Offered: MS, PhD, DPT; Application Deadline: visit kins.uconn.edu for details)

Linda Pescatello, PhD, FACSM, FAHA (860.486.0008; linda.pescatello@uconn.edu)  
Research Interests: Cardiovascular Physiology, Exercise Prescription for Clinical Populations; Exercise "Omics," Exercise and Aging, and Health Promotion.

**Nutritional Sciences (NUSC)** - The Department of Nutritional Sciences focuses on three areas of study, including Biochemical and Molecular Nutrition, Human Nutrition and Metabolism, and Community Nutrition.  
(Degrees Offered: MS, PhD; Application Deadline: February 15th (to be eligible for funding))

Amy Mobley, PhD RD (860.486.5073; amy.mobley@uconn.edu)  
Research Interests: Topics or approaches related to changing dietary behavior, including obesity prevention, nutrition education, social marketing, and food security.

**Social Psychology (PSYC)** - The Social Psychology Program is one of six divisions within the Department of Psychological Sciences. The program focuses on studying important social issues (e.g. health, prejudice) using multiple theoretical perspectives, multiple methods, and multiple levels of analysis (e.g. individual, intergroup, network, society).  
(Degrees Offered: PhD; Application Deadline: December 1st (PhD))

Diane Quinn, PhD (860.486.4936; diane.quinn@uconn.edu)  
Research Interests: Experiences and outcomes of people with socially stigmatized identities, including gender, race, obesity, and mental illness. Current obesity work focuses on the psychological processes underlying weight maintenance.