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UTMB
Executive Summary

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In response to Texas' low health rankings, the University of Texas (UT) System Board of Regents, in February 2015, approved $5 million in funding to support the University of Texas Collaborative on Population Health Innovation and Improvement (CoPHII). Project leads were identified to guide the development of strategic plans for collaborative projects to address Texas' most critical population health needs at UT Health Science Centers and the two new UT medical schools.

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV), which aims to become a leader in student success, teaching, research, and health care, is one of the institutions participating in CoPHII. The team is led by Dr. Leonel Vela, Senior Associate Dean for Education and Academic Affairs, at UTRGV's School of Medicine.

The objective of this report is to provide an actionable CoPHII strategic plan for UTRGV that, based on identified community needs and stakeholder input, will highlight population health priorities through a set of goals and objectives that aim to improve the health of our population and address health disparities. Our catchment area (Section 1), includes the four border counties of Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, and Willacy, home to more than 1.3 million people representing half the population of the Texas-Mexico border.

To identify our plan's priority areas, we consulted with various sources: secondary data (Section 2), existing community needs assessments at the regional and institutional levels (Section 3), key informant interviews, input from the CoPHII Advisory Group, and collected primary data for a community health needs assessment from the perspective of public health personnel (Section 2). We also conducted a scan of community and institutional resources relevant to population health promotion (Sections 4, 6, and 7).

Based on the findings from the various approaches to assessing the community's health needs and priorities, we identified the following: (1) obesity and diabetes are major health concerns; (2) access to health care is a serious challenge; (3) an engaged university system is important for community members; and (4) development and training opportunities are key for the medical and population health workforce. The table below identifies the strategic priorities and corresponding goals for UTRGV's CoPHII initiative to meet the identified needs. Our goals are comprehensive and represent a plan that aims to improve population health in the long term. As such, the implementation phase (Year 2) of the CoPHII strategic plan will focus on a few goals and will set the groundwork for some others (see Section 9 for details).

Our CoPHII strategic plan for UTRGV capitalizes on our unique geographic location and corresponding sociodemographic characteristics. It creates an integrated infrastructure that represents a unique partnership model between a general academic institution, primarily the College of Health Affairs (COHA), and a School of Medicine (SOM). Through a collaborative Center for Population Health Equity we will build on the expertise of the

South Texas Border Health Disparities Center (COHA), the Health Disparities Scholars Program (COHA), the Border Health Office (COHA), and the Department of Population Health (SOM), among many others. The Center for Population Health Equity will provide the venue for implementing many of the plan's goals including, but not limited to, the infrastructure for surveillance and maintenance of population health indicators, the development of population health curricular components, training of student teams in population health assistance projects, and the channels for advancing a transformative research agenda that responds to key trends in health and health care delivery. Most importantly, the Center will establish UTRGV as the premier source for furthering the understanding of "Border" health issues and for informing policy decisions at the state, national, and binational levels.

The University Of Texas Rio Grande Valley CoPHII Strategic Priorities and Goals	
Mission	To position UTRGV as a national leader in population health innovation through productive community partnerships, educational excellence, and a rigorous research agenda focused on improving population health in the Rio Grande Valley and beyond.
Strategic Priority 1	Community Resource Position UTRGV as a community resource for population health innovation and improvement through the provision of services that help identify health priority areas, that guide action on population health, and that assist in evaluating the impact of health policies and interventions
Goal 1.1	Create platforms for ongoing population health surveillance through the systematic collection and dissemination of metrics that can guide action on population health and allow assessment of the progress/impact of interventions at the population level
Goal 1.2	Build expertise in key areas supporting population health sciences
Goal 1.3	Establish an inventory of evidence-based approaches and policies to promote population health and develop a support infrastructure to assist with the implementation of these approaches
Goal 1.4	Support the accreditation of local public health agencies
Goal 1.5	Participate in conversations supporting the development and implementation of telehealth services
Goal 1.6	Maintain a network of key community stakeholders promoting population health
Strategic Priority 2	Population Health Workforce Development Build a diverse health workforce with a keen understanding of the determinants of population health and health inequities and with the cultural skills necessary to serve an increasingly diverse population
Goal 2.1	Integrate a population health framework in the education of health professionals to raise awareness of the social determinants of health and their role in influencing health outcomes and in leading to health inequities

Goal 2.2	Develop a Population Health Certificate for medical and allied health professionals/students
Goal 2.3	Develop an interprofessional training infrastructure for student teams trained in assisting with project needs for population health researchers and local public health organizations
Goal 2.4	Advance training and certification opportunities for community health workers
Strategic Priority 3	Population Health Sciences Innovation Advance population health sciences innovation through a transformative research agenda that responds to key trends in health and health care and their corresponding impact on population health
Goal 3.1	Conduct a biennial population-based survey that responds to key border and minority health policy information needs at the regional, state, & national levels
Goal 3.2	Support innovative interdisciplinary research projects that promise to advance population health sciences
Goal 3.3	Develop the infrastructure for disease registries that link potential research participants with the academic community