California State University, Northridge: BUILD PODER
ABOUT BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE LEADING TO DIVERSITY (BUILD) 
PROMOTING OPPORTUNITIES IN EDUCATION AND RESEARCH (PODER)

California State University, Northridge’s BUILD PODER (Building Infrastructure Leading to Diversity, Promoting Opportunities in Education and Research) is a large undergraduate biomedical research training program established in 2014 by a $22 million grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Under the auspices of the NIH Diversity Program Consortium (DPC), BUILD PODER is one of the ten NIH-funded BUILD sites that train undergraduates to become biomedical researchers. Along with the National Research Mentoring Network (NRMN) and the Coordination and Evaluation Center (CEC), BUILD sites coordinate their activities and data to develop a national database of best practices.

USING CRITICAL RACE THEORY AS A FOUNDATION

“Poder” also means “power” or “to be able to” in Spanish. Through the lens of the Critical Race Theory, we focus on the social justice and reducing health disparities in communities. BUILD PODER’s transformative framework is Critical Race Theory. Students and mentors are challenged to develop research questions, methods, interpretations, and applications relevant to their experiences and framed in familiar social justice issues. Critical Race Theory has its roots in the Civil Rights and Critical Legal Studies movements, where it provided a framework “to critically interrogate how the law reproduces, reifies, and normalizes racism in society” (Lopez, 2003, p. 81).

Critical Race Theory is the basis for many programmatic activities including the student summer JumpStart program and faculty mentor training. At BUILD PODER, we believe that when we diversify the biomedical workforce, researchers will generate innovative and relevant research questions, methods, and interpretations that will lead to health equity.

BUILD PODER is sustained by the formation of a new Health Equity Research and Education (HERE) Center that supports 4 cluster-hired faculty members and postdoctoral scholars in engaging undergraduates in biomedical research. The program has supported and trained nearly 200 students and over 100 faculty.
mentors who work together on mutual biomedical research projects and present their work at professional conferences. Students originate from CSUN as well as BUILD PODER’s four community college “pipeline partners” including East Los Angeles College (ELAC), Los Angeles Valley College (LAVC), Los Angeles Pierce College (LAPC), and Pasadena City College (PCC).

Students begin with a Summer JumpStart program to orient them to the ethical and technical aspects of biomedical research, take advanced research methods and professional development courses, and participate in summer research training opportunities. Mentors attend a 16-hour orientation to mentoring with humility, attend an annual training and have opportunities for research training in pilot projects, grant-writing and other methods training, and attend conferences that inform the community about Critical Race Theory.

Our logic model is framed by a historically and socially intractable problem of institutionalized racism that influences both educational and health outcomes for vulnerable or oppressed groups. Through student and faculty training, faculty leads provide continual and hands-on experiences that challenge the taken-for-granted assumptions we hold as a result of being socialized in a racist society. The ubiquitous nature of racism formalized by Critical Race Theory can be challenged through a strength-based awareness and reinforced through a community of rigor, belonging, and meaning through social justice linkages to biomedical research. At BUILD PODER, we emphasize that students have community cultural wealth (CCW; Yosso, 2005) that allows them to identify different research questions, methods, and interpretations that may move science forward quickly; innovation from new voices with experiences in vulnerable communities will play a significant role in reducing health disparities in research and practice in the future.

THE CORE RESPONSIBILITIES

Each NIH BUILD program has four "core" responsibilities. At CSUN:

1. **The Administrative Core** provides oversight to BUILD PODER and reflects our relationships with the NIH, our Local Steering Committee, our evaluation team, CARE (Center for Assessment, Research, and Education) and our regular meetings, events, and record-keeping.

2. **The Institutional Development Core** provides resources that provide sustainability (enduring into the future) and integration into CSUN’s mission and priorities. Through BUILD PODER, we have a new campus building, Lilac Hall, four new cluster hired faculty members, and launched the Health
Equity Research and Education Center. In addition, we have developed a "Faculty App" that provides a forum for faculty to publicly present their research interests, skills, and availability for collaboration with colleagues or research assistance with students.

3. **The Research Enrichment Core** provides faculty with research opportunities, skills, and mentor training to prepare them to be the best research mentors that they can be. The Research Enrichment Core’s research training includes the Faculty Scholar Academy grant-writing training and coaching, the Pilot Project program, and regular conferences and opportunities to have one’s work edited or to work collaboratively with other faculty members on grant proposals. The faculty research mentor training, a highlight of the Research Enrichment Core, is rooted in our Critical Race Theory foundations and challenges faculty members to become aware of and to respond to unconscious biases about students who are different from themselves.

4. The centerpiece of BUILD PODER is the **Student Training Core**. Faculty leads oversee the mentoring and professional development of nearly 200 undergraduates in 30 majors and mastermind multiple Student Training Core activities. Central to the Student Training Core is the initial Summer JumpStart program, a 4-week intensive in which students learn basic research skills, research ethics, learn about the broader contexts of science and forming a science identity, and they meet with and learn more about their mentor and their new research laboratory. Each cohort is a community, and each cohort forms a mentoring bond with other cohorts.

NIH BUILD PODER provides linkages between biomedical research and social justice so that students and their faculty mentors can plainly see that their efforts to work on behalf of health equity will be feasible and meaningful.
LINKS TO FURTHER INFORMATION

Partnering Organizations:

- NIH Diversity Program Consortium (DPC)
- National Research Mentoring Network (NRMN)
- Coordination and Evaluation Center (CEC)
- Health Equity Research and Education (HERE) Center
- East Los Angeles College
- Los Angeles Valley College
- Los Angeles Pierce College
- Pasadena City College
- Center for Assessment, Research and Education (CARE)
- Pilot Projects Program
- Summer JumpStart Program
ABOUT APLU
The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) is North America’s oldest higher education association. APLU is a research, policy, and advocacy organization dedicated to strengthening and advancing the work of public universities in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. The association's membership consists of public research universities, land-grant institutions, state university systems, and affiliated organizations.

APLU's mission is to: expand access and improve student success to deliver the innovative workforce of tomorrow; advance and promote research and discovery to improve society, foster economic growth, and address global challenges; and build healthy, prosperous, equitable, and vibrant communities locally and globally.

Based in Washington, DC, the association's work is furthered by an active and effective advocacy arm that works with Congress and the administration as well as the media to advance federal policies that strengthen public universities and benefit the students they serve.

ABOUT THE IEP UNIVERSITIES PROGRAM
APLU and its Commission on Economic and Community Engagement (CECE) established the Innovation and Economic Prosperity (IEP) Universities Program to help higher education institutions codify, elevate, and advance their campus enterprise supporting economic and community development.

The IEP designation program recognizes institutions that have demonstrated a meaningful, ongoing and substantial commitment to economic and community development, growth, and economic opportunity.

The IEP awards program recognize exemplary and innovative projects in university-based economic and community engagement:

- **Talent** and workforce development
- **Innovation**, entrepreneurship, and tech-based economic development
- **Place** development through public service, outreach, and community engagement

Learn more at: [www.APLU.org/IEP](http://www.APLU.org/IEP)