OUR PATH FORWARD
The challenges we face demand public health solutions.
in advocacy and research that can better inform public policies that support the needs of LGBTQ youth. We look forward to working with the center to educate policymakers, advocate for LGBTQ youth, and provide unique insight into their mental health.”

C-LARAH will provide training and mentorship opportunities for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows to support the growing demand for public health research that benefits vulnerable sexual and gender minorities. The center’s plans include establishing a postdoctoral fellowship program and a certificate program in LGBTQ health, as well as awarding pilot funding to researchers so that they can generate initial data that can then be used in applications for larger government and foundation grants. Mimiga says financial support — through center and training program grants from the National Institutes of Health; federal and foundation-funded research grants; and private donor and endowment gifts — will be a key factor in the center’s success. In March, a team led by Mimiga received an $8.8 million grant from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases to conduct a nationwide study aimed at reducing the spread of HIV among young transgender women through the use of a mobile app. The app, LifeSkills Mobile, allows high-risk women who are unable to participate in face-to-face interventions due to geographic and socioeconomic barriers to easily access comprehensive HIV-prevention information and strategies.

For Mimiga, the Fielding School appointment marks a return to the city where he was born and raised. He was initially drawn to research in HIV prevention after a close friend was diagnosed with HIV at age 16 in the early 1990s. “I saw his day-to-day struggles taking antiretroviral therapy, which had terrible side effects at the time,” Mimiga recalls. “And I saw the stigma and discrimination he experienced from being HIV-positive and knew I wanted to be involved in work that addressed that.”

In the years since, Mimiga has built a reputation as a leading researcher in the areas of HIV prevention and sexual and gender minority health, working in both academic and community settings. He has authored more than 350 peer-reviewed scientific journal articles, book chapters, and commentaries as a faculty member at Brown and, prior to that, at Harvard. He has a 20-year research partnership and is currently an affiliated senior research scientist with The Fenway Institute in Boston, an interdisciplinary center for research, education, training, and policy development to optimize health for sexual and gender minorities and those affected by HIV.

Much of Mimiga’s research has involved assessing the efficacy of psychosocial and biobehavioral interventions designed to decrease HIV risk by addressing mental health problems such as depression and trauma, substance use disorder, and access to prevention programs and medical care, including the uptake and adherence to antiretroviral medications for treatment and prevention. Ongoing studies are focused on sexual and gender minority populations, some of which include transgender women; adolescents and young adults; gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men; and street-based male sex workers and internet escorts. In addition, Mimiga’s research has led to two novel HIV prevention interventions that are now part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Compendium of Evidence-Based Interventions and Best Practices for HIV Prevention. At the Fielding School, Mimiga will also co-lead the Multicenter AIDS Cohort Study, or MACS. Dr. Roger Detels, principal investigator of MACS and an FSPH distinguished professor of epidemiology, has directed MACS at UCLA since 1984; in that time, more than 7,000 gay and bisexual men have been enrolled in the study, which has produced groundbreaking findings on the epidemic.

“As a member of the LGBTQ community, I know what it’s like to experience discrimination and fear around my sexual identity. I look forward to the impact C-LARAH will have in training future generations of scientists interested in conducting LGBTQ public health research.” — Dr. Matthew Mimiga

“As a member of the LGBTQ community, I know what it’s like to experience discrimination and fear around my sexual identity,” Mimiga says. “It’s extremely rewarding to be involved in work that is making a difference in the lives of historically marginalized members of society. I look forward to the impact C-LARAH will have in training future generations of scientists interested in conducting LGBTQ public health research and holistically serving sexual and gender minorities through all social determinants of health and justice.”

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