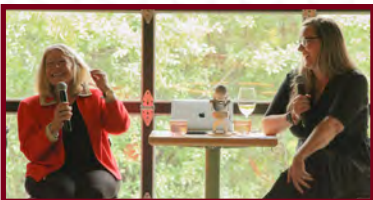


ANNUAL REPORT 2025



Eli Coleman Institute for
Sexual and Gender Health

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA



OUR MISSION

A vibrant leader in advancing and promoting positive sexual and gender health at the local, national and global levels, through our integrated CARE model of work.

- C = Clinical Care: Advancing, providing, and promoting evidence-informed care
- A = Advocacy: Advocating for sexual and gender rights and well-being
- R = Research: Discovering through groundbreaking multidisciplinary research
- E = Education: Developing cutting-edge education to equip the next generation



OUR VISION

Building a world where sexual and gender well-being is protected and accessible to all.



Photo: Ryan Rahm-Knigge, PhD; Kristen Mark, PhD, MPH; Steven John, PhD, MPH

The past year has unfolded amid a complex and often tumultuous sociopolitical climate, underscoring the vital importance of evidence-based inquiry and dialogue around sexual and gender health. For our institute, this period has reaffirmed both the urgency and the relevance of our work. In the face of uncertainty, we have continued to advance research, education, and advocacy that bridge disciplines, challenge assumptions, and centers equity. We experienced a strong demand for our clinical services and have continued to provide this care with compassion and dedication.

As we look back on the past year, we are inspired by the dedication, collaboration, and resilience that have defined our work together. We said goodbye to Dr. Greta Bauer as our Director and created an Interim Co-Director model with Drs. Kristen Mark, Steven John, and Ryan Rahm-Knigge, who lead our three pillars of education, research, and clinical care, respectively. We stepped into the Interim Co-Director roles knowing that it would be a challenging yet critical time to lead. As an institute, we persevered with strength and solidarity—more important now than ever.

Thank you to Dr. Bauer for her two years of service to the Institute and the work she did during the transitional period after Eli Coleman's retirement. We are thrilled to announce our active engagement in an international search for the next Director of the Eli Coleman Institute for Sexual and Gender Health and Endowed Chair in Sexual Health.

This annual report reflects both our accomplishments and our collective persistence and adaptability. It highlights how our faculty, staff, scholars, and partners have responded to shifting societal dynamics with creativity, integrity, and a steadfast commitment to sexual and gender health. We welcomed a new Research Director in January, a new Assistant Professor in August, and the inaugural Bean Robinson Endowed Chair in September. We are more grateful than ever for the philanthropic support that has allowed us to feel confident in our ability to weather this storm, resulting in incredible success to recruit field-leading faculty to join us. This stability is crucial in our success—thank you for your generosity.

Ryan Rahm-Knigge, PhD, LP
Kristen Mark, PhD, MPH
Steven A. John, PhD, MPH
Interim Co-Directors



LETTER FROM THE INTERIM CO-DIRECTORS

RELATIONSHIP AND SEX THERAPY (REST)

The Relationship and Sex Therapy (REST) Program provides individual, relationship, and group therapy services to address sexual functioning, health, pleasure, and relationship concerns. The REST Program has been a cornerstone of the clinic at ISGH, offering sex therapy with a range of foci reflecting the changing needs of our communities. Faculty within the REST program have developed models of care, published internationally utilized research, and innovated clinical care within sexual and relationship wellbeing.



The REST Program is now poised to undergo another innovative phase with the hiring of our first Beatrice “Bean” Robinson Endowed Chair in Clinical Sexual Health, Chiara Acquati, PhD, as well as the transition of the REST coordinator position, from Abby Girard, PsyD to Katie Spencer, PhD. This year the REST Program held a half-day retreat, where faculty engaged in exercises aimed at fostering reconnecting with original passions for sexology and sex therapy as a field, and space to connect with each other. The team reflected on core values such as pleasure as liberatory, authenticity, community collaboration, and connection. The REST Program set intentions to grow sexual health and pleasure groups, expand accessibility of services, and reach broader communities.

COMPULSIVE SEXUAL BEHAVIOR (CSB)

The Compulsive Sexual Behavior (CSB) Program provides individual, relationship, group, and aftercare therapy services to address difficulties with compulsive or out-of-control sexual behavior. Individualized services range from providing accurate and positive sex education to comprehensive care that includes assessment, therapy, and psychiatric care to help individuals improve overall wellbeing and relationships. We have a team approach in treatment, which includes care collaboration and consultation. Our integrated model is empirically tested through peer-reviewed research. Recent published studies have refined assessment tools based on World Health Organization diagnostic guidelines for Compulsive Sexual Behavior Disorder, identified patterns in emotion dysregulation, and explored how minority stress and mental health are related to CSB.

LIFESPAN GENDER HEALTH (LGH)

The ISGH gender therapy programs went through a renaming process and is now called the Lifespan Gender Health (LGH) Program to emphasize our commitment to providing high-quality gender-affirming care across the lifespan. Guided by the Gender-Affirmative Lifespan Approach (GALA), we continue to provide services tailored to the unique needs of children, adolescents, emerging adults, adults and elders in our communities. Nic Rider, PhD, has also stepped down from their role as LGH-Adult Program coordinator to focus on advocacy work and leading the National Center for Gender Health. Elizabeth Panetta, LICSW, began their new role as LGH-Adult Program coordinator in May 2025 and will continue collaboration with Dianne Berg, PhD, as the LGH-Children and Adolescent Program coordinator.



RE-INTRODUCING PROGRAMS

CLINIC



Photo: Jennifer Connor, PhD, LMFT

Our clinical services remained steadfast over the past year. Through our M Health Fairview Sexual and Gender Health Clinic, we provide individual, relationship, and group therapy across our programs in Lifespan Gender Health, Relationship and Sex Therapy, and Compulsive Sexual Behavior. Further, we continue to grow our medical services in sexual and gender health and psychiatry while increasing collaborative, multi-disciplinary care across clinicians.

In the past year, we also fostered exciting changes in clinical leadership. Since 2019, Jennifer Connor, PhD, LMFT, has graciously served as Director of Clinical Services. Through her dedicated leadership, Dr. Connor navigated the clinic through the COVID-19 pandemic and changes in healthcare system relationships – all while expanding care delivered through the clinic. Because of her grant and research success, Dr. Connor transitioned clinic leadership to Ryan Rahm-Knigge, PhD, LP, starting January 1, 2025. Dr. Connor’s commitment to the success of the clinic was reflected by a thorough transition plan that has maintained the stability of the clinic. Since January, our foundational strength has allowed us to continue our work supporting our communities.

**10,892
PATIENT VISITS
IN 2025**

COMPULSIVE SEXUAL BEHAVIOR

RELATIONSHIP & SEX THERAPY

TRANS & GENDER-DIVERSE HEALTH

SEXUAL AND GENDER MEDICINE

CLINICAL CARE





“Dr. Feldman is an incredible doctor. She answers all of my questions, indulges my curiosity about everything, and pays close attention to me and my health. If I forget to mention something, she asks about it. I adore this doctor and am grateful for her due to the excellent care.”

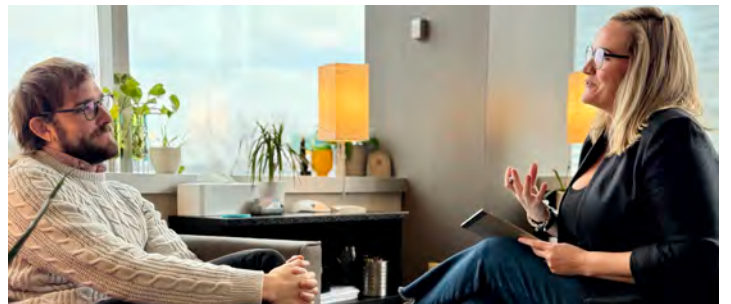
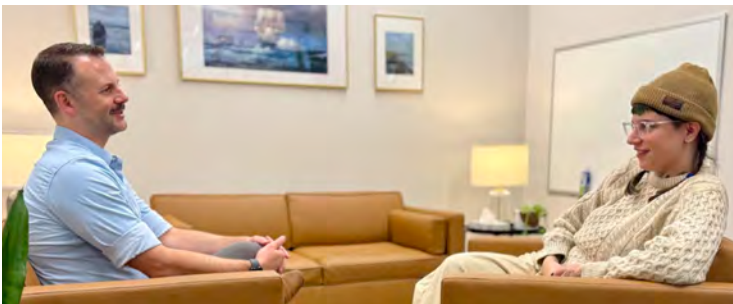
“I really really appreciate how patient-centered Jacob Ginther is. It feels like he is a resource and ally for giving me information and helping me take my health care in the direction that feels best for me. He listens, values, and prioritizes honoring my input every time. He seems to really care about making medication management as accessible as possible too, always reinforcing that he’s happy to help me via messages in MyChart between appts if I need. Super grateful for his care!”

“Dr. Shari Brightly-Brown is a superb therapist. They are always prepared with thought-provoking questions and homework. They are an empathetic listener, and I am making a lot of progress under their care.”

“Great clinic. Everyone is friendly and I feel welcome.”

“Abby Girard was a wonderful provider. She was kind, caring, listened intently, made me feel comfortable and able to open up about what I was feeling. I look forward to working with her in the future.”

“Every interaction I have with the healthcare team at M Fairview is incredibly positive. I’m always listened to, supported, and comprehensively informed about my care options. The care team is incredibly knowledgeable, empathetic, and well versed in their areas of expertise.”



CLINICAL CARE

UMP CLINICAL EXCELLENCE AWARDS

In 2021, M Physicians established Clinical Excellence Honors as a way to recognize our extraordinary clinical practitioners and to highlight those who consistently go above and beyond in delivering exceptional patient care. This year we are proud to celebrate Drs. Ryan Rahm-Knigge and Jon Poquiz. Thank you for all you do for your patients!



Photo: Ryan Rahm-Knigge, PhD, LP



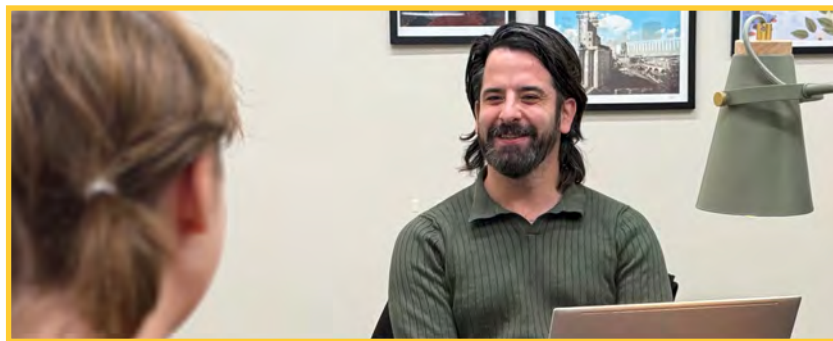
Photo: Jon Poquiz, PhD, LP

UMP EXTRAORDINARY U+ AWARD



Photo: Jacob Ginther, DMSc, PA-C

We [the leadership team] honor your heart, skill, and dedication in making a difference in our patient's lives everyday, along with support of your colleagues and your team.



MESSAGE FROM THE RESEARCH DIRECTOR



I am thrilled to join ISGH as the Director of Research. After spending my early career at the Medical College of Wisconsin, I joined the University of Minnesota Medical School in January 2025 as a tenured Associate Professor. My program of research centers on developing behavioral interventions and implementation strategies to support biomedical care engagement among sexual and gender minoritized people. Notably, I have secured nearly \$12M in extramural research funding over the course of my career as PI, team scientist, and mentor, and I look forward to supporting the continued growth of the research mission at ISGH.

Photo: Steven A. John, PhD, MPH

ISGH reported \$1.5M in research expenditures in fiscal year 2025, which is a notable increase from \$1.375M in 2024, and marks a three-year period of continued, year-over-year research growth. In terms of 2025 NIH funding, ISGH was home to two active R01s (ReWosh, PI: Connor; Tanzabilities, PI: Mark), one R34 (TIPS, PI: John), and two R21s (Mosaic, PI: Miner; NHPI & AA UNITY, PI: Rider). ISGH investigators also contributed to multiple NIH awards across the University of Minnesota and nationwide. We also held a diverse portfolio of research funded by internal mechanisms, endowment funding, and foundation awards to support mission-related research projects that do not align with NIH funding priorities (e.g., GenderFlex, PI: Berg).

ISGH continued to support the training of early-stage investigators, with notable grants including the NIH-funded K12 BIRCWH early-career faculty training program (PI: Mark), an individual clinician-scientist development award funded by the American Cancer Society (PI: Girard), a CEARCH Pilot Award funded by the UMN Clinical and Translation Science Institute (MPIs: de Oliveira and Mark), and two UMN Global Programs and Strategy Alliance Travel Awards to foster international research collaborations (PIs: Panetta and Poquiz). Our clinical postdocs were also offered protected time for research, which was funded by the generosity of our donors.

ISGH continued with a strong record of research dissemination in 2025. ISGH faculty and trainees published 59 manuscripts in peer-reviewed journals and gave 72 research presentations to audiences ranging from local to international.

We look forward to continued research excellence in 2026. Please consider donating (see our giving page) to help foster continued research growth.



RESEARCH

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT: GLOBAL PROGRAMS AND STRATEGY ALLIANCE

Jon Poquiz, PhD, and Elizabeth Panetta, LICSW, both earned travel grants through the University of Minnesota's Global Programs and Strategy Alliance. Through these grants, they were able to collaborate in person with their international research partner Luis Abesamis, MHSS, in the Philippines. Jon, Elizabeth, and Luis engaged in relationship-building with several other researchers, care providers, and community advocates centered on transgender and gender diverse Filipinos. The team continues to meet and work together on an international research project centered on building towards health equity by and for transgender and gender diverse Filipinos.



Photo: The Ateneo Gender Hub Team



Photo: Elizabeth Panetta, LICSW, Jon Poquiz, PhD, Luis Abesamis, MHSS, Samantha Noelle Aquino, MS, Magda Robinson, Mira Alexis Ofreneo, PhD, Elizabeth Panetta, MSW, LICSW



VISITING SCHOLARS PRESENT RESEARCH ON TRANS HEALTHCARE STIGMA



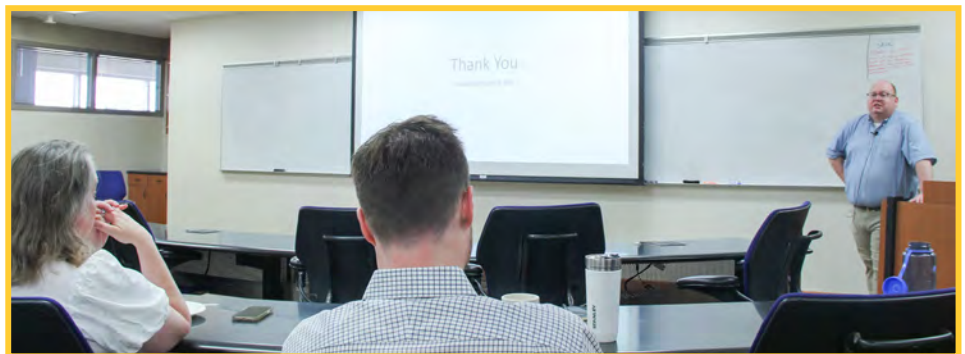
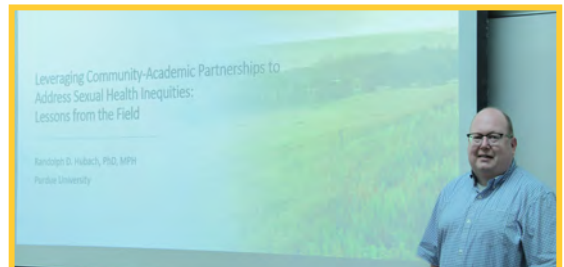
On April 29, 2025, Dr. Anna Martha Vaites Fontanari, Dr. Angelo Brandelli Costa, and Dr. Julia Zubaran visited ISGH and presented their research “Health Professionals’ Experiences of Stigma in the Context of Trans Healthcare: a Thematic Analysis of Focus Groups In Brazil.” Part of this two-hour seminar included questions, feedback, and initial reactions to Dr. Fontanari, Dr. Costa, and Dr. Zubaran’s research findings. The in-depth conversation allowed our faculty to reflect and share their own experiences of stigma in trans healthcare in the context of the US and opened up conversations on future international research collaborations.

ADVANCES IN SEXUAL AND GENDER HEALTH SEMINARS

ISGH holds monthly Advances in Sexual and Gender Health Seminars, where faculty, postdoctoral fellows, researchers, clinicians, and community collaborators present their latest work in sexual and gender health research and practice. These talks, formerly known as ISGH Faculty Research Presentations, were renamed this year to reflect a broader scope of topics and speakers.

The ISGH Advances in Sexual and Gender Health Seminars meet the requirements of American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors, and Therapists (AASECT) and are approved for one CE credit. These seminars are open to both in-person and Zoom attendees and registration is required. For more information or to register to attend these events, please send an email to isghres@umn.edu.

Recordings of previous presentations are available at z.umn.edu/ASGHS_recordings.



RESEARCH

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT: JENNIFER CONNOR, PHD, LMFT

Jennifer Connor, PhD, LMFT, will be on sabbatical from September 2025 until March 2026, as she works on her research projects. During her sabbatical, she will spend time in Tanzania with the research team for the Restoring Women's Sexual Health Project, which is an NIH-funded R01 project.



Photo: Dr. Agness Massae, Dr. Jennifer Connor, Prof. Bruno Sunguya, and Prof. Crista Agbakwu

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT: LEONOR DE OLIVEIRA, PHD, AND KRISTEN MARK, PHD, MPH



Metz Fellow Leonor de Oliveira, PhD, and Joycelyn Elders Chair Kristen Mark, PhD, MPH, received a Community Health Collaborative Pilot Grant from the Office of Community Engagement to Advance Research and Community Health (CEARCH) titled "Guiding Care: A Reproductive Justice-Informed and Community-Engaged Study with Abortion Support Groups and Their Role

in Abortion Access Equity." They are collaborating with SPIRAL Collective, a local reproductive justice nonprofit that provides abortion support, transportation support, and aftercare kits. Interviews and focus groups are providing insight into the barriers and opportunities to abortion support work.



PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Publications

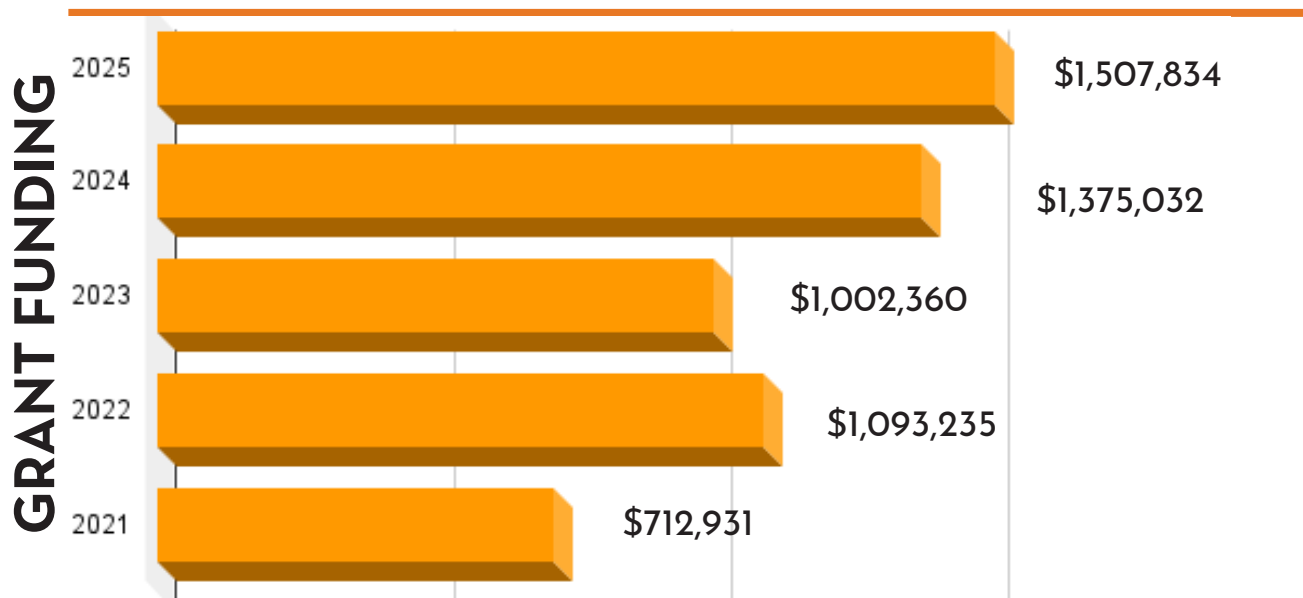


Scan the code or visit z.umn.edu/ISGHPublications2025 to view citations for ISGH research publications published in 2025. Our faculty publish world-class research on topics such as child and adolescent gender health; compulsive sexual behavior; lesbian, gay, and bisexual health; relationship and sex therapy; sexual health and rights; adult transgender health; and more.

Presentations



Scan the code or visit z.umn.edu/ISGHPresentations2025 to view a list of presentations given by ISGH faculty in 2025. Our faculty have presented their research at conferences and symposia around the world, as well as right here in Minneapolis.



RESEARCH

INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE WORLD SEXUAL HEALTH ASSEMBLY IN PORTO

The first-ever World Sexual Health Assembly (WSHA) took place in Porto, Portugal on September 5, 2025, bringing together leaders and organizations from across the globe. The Assembly was created in response to growing threats to sexual health services and human rights.

At the University of Porto, participants signed the Porto Proclamation, a joint commitment to stand together and defend sexual health, rights, and justice for all people. The message is clear: Sexual health is health, sexual rights are human rights, and sexual justice is essential for dignity and equality.

Why now?

The Assembly comes at a critical time. Around the world, communities are facing:

- Political crises and international conflicts
- Cuts to funding for essential health services
- Growing inequalities and humanitarian emergencies
- The impact of climate change on vulnerable populations

Against these challenges, the WSHA represents a united global response. By working together, leaders from 40 leading organizations have pledged to ensure that everyone has access to inclusive, evidence-based, and person-centered sexual health services, education, and information.



Dr. Faysal El Kak, president of the World Association for Sexual Health (WAS) and chair of the WSHA, said: “We have moved from fragmented advocacy to collective power. Together, we will make sexual health a core pillar of public health and human rights—and act with a shared purpose.”

Dr. Kristen Mark, Interim Co-Director, Director of Education, and Joycelyn Elders Chair, added:

“Defending sexual health, rights, and justice for all people is core to the work we do at the Eli Coleman Institute for Sexual and Gender Health and The

Porto Proclamation marks a collective global commitment to advancing and prioritizing this work.”

The full text of the Porto Proclamation and signatories of the Porto Declaration was published on September 14, 2025.



ADVOCACY TALKS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

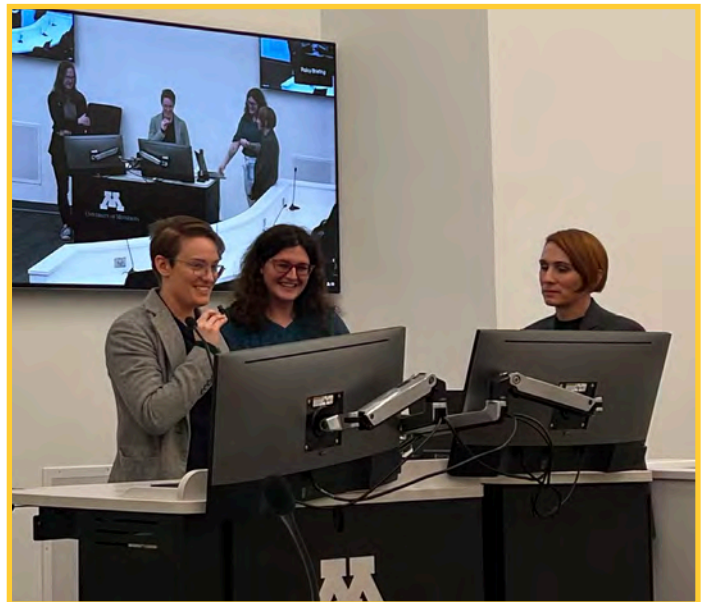
Amid a rapidly evolving policy landscape, the National Center for Gender Health, an entity within ISGH, partnered with OutFront Minnesota, Taft Law, Ash Tifa Consulting, Transforming Families, the Volunteer Lawyers Network, UMN OutLaw, and the UMN Human Rights Center to co-sponsor a series of policy briefings on the state of transgender rights. Each session featured expert panelists—Kat Rohn (OutFront Minnesota), m boulette (Taft Law), Ash Tifa (Ash Tifa Consulting), and CB Baga (Maslon and the Volunteer Lawyers Network)—who shared timely insights and practical guidance. The hybrid format ensured broad accessibility, drawing hundreds of participants who received up-to-date information and the opportunity to engage directly with presenters and representatives from co-sponsors. Topics included recent federal actions affecting transgender communities, strategies for enhancing safety and community care, and guidance related to healthcare and documentation access. These briefings helped strengthen understanding, emphasize connection, and foster resilience within transgender and allied communities.



Photo: Nic Rider, Toli, m boulette, Kat Rohn, Ash Tifa, CB Baga



Photo: Hannah Edwards, Kat Rohn, m boulette, Nic Rider, and Toli



PUBLISHED COMMENTARIES

The past year gave rise to political challenges that called upon all of us to use our collective voice and scholarship to champion the science-based work we do. Energized by the overwhelming support from our communities and leadership, we contributed to national conversations on the rights and well-being of transgender and gender diverse (TGD) youth through two advocacy-focused commentaries.

In the first, published in *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, Rider and colleagues (2025) critiqued the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services review on pediatric gender health care, highlighting that it advances a political agenda rather than an impartial assessment of evidence. The authors emphasized that restricting gender-affirming care poses serious risks to the mental health and well-being of TGD youth. The authors also put forth a call to action to protect access to evidence-informed care, uphold scientific integrity, and center the voices and lived experiences of TGD youth and their families in policy and practice.

In the second, published in *Annals of LGBTQ Public and Population Health*, John and colleagues (2025) challenged the harmful rhetoric in the April 2025 White House proclamation misrepresenting support for TGD youth as “child abuse.” The commentary noted that gender-affirming care is evidence-informed and has lifesaving impacts. The authors also highlighted the importance of protecting parents’ rights to make informed healthcare decisions in partnership with qualified providers.

In addition to these commentaries focused on gender health, John and colleagues (2025) also published a commentary in *The Lancet HIV* calling out the impact of the current political impact on efforts to end the HIV epidemic. In this scathing correspondence, we called for five actionable steps of policy-makers and other stakeholders to leverage our biomedical advances in this space to end HIV in the US.

These publications reflect our continued commitment to advancing evidence-informed, compassionate approaches that promote health equity in sexual and gender health.



Sexuality Research and Social Policy



Annals of LGBTQ Public and Population Health



The Lancet HIV



GRADUATE EDUCATION

This year our graduate education offerings continued to expand! We added another certification to the MPS in Human Sexuality, with the approval of an Advanced Sex Education Certification. This Advanced Sex Education Certificate is aimed at developing or building on sexual health educator skills. This certificate also fulfills the American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors, and Therapists (AASECT) requirements to pursue the Certified Sex Educator (CSE) credential.

The approval of the Advanced Sex Education Certification also brought two new courses: HSEX 6095 and HSEX 6017. Sexual Health Education Practicum and Supervision (HSEX 6095) is a three-credit course designed to assist students in their growth as a sex education professional and meet AASECT supervision requirements. It is offered by Certified Sexuality Educator Supervisor (CSE-S) Dr. Kristen Mark. Design, Implementation, and Evaluation of Sexuality Education (HSEX 6017), developed and taught by Education Specialist Michael Gendernalik, provides students the opportunity to develop critical skills in evidence-based sexuality education curriculum, design, development, implementation, and evaluation, culminating in a final sex ed project.

ISGH continues to expand its connections across the University and Minnesota via community events. As an AASECT-approved CE provider at ISGH, we have issued a total of 124 hours worth of free CEs.

2SLGBTQIA+ INTERGENERATIONAL MINGLE

The 2SLGBTQIA+ Intergenerational Mingle is a queer intergenerational community building space. In the past year at our events, we have had various structured and unstructured activities (e.g., speed friending, arts and crafts) for the queer community to connect across generations while learning about how to get involved with local organizations to continue to build intergenerational community locally. We are currently hosting a series of intergenerational conversations that participants will work together to turn into an art project. Through these events, we have seen the building of intergenerational connections in our local 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and we hope to continue this to decrease isolation among queer people, particularly the aging queer community.



ISGH SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT LECTURE 2025

ISGH was honored to host associate professor and author of “Good Sex,” Dr. Candice Hargons, for the 2025 ISGH Sexual Development Lecture. Dr. Hargons is an award-winning psychologist and associate professor at Emory University’s Rollins School of Public Health, where she expands our knowledge around sexual wellness and liberation. The lecture explored why a focus on sexual liberation offers a vital, and often underestimated, approach to understanding and impacting our current political moment.

It introduced a dynamic, bidirectional ecological model showing how broader societal forces deeply influence our sexual selves, and, crucially, how actively pursuing sexual liberation cultivates intimate justice. Intimate justice provides personal and relational nourishment that empowers people to effect positive change in their sexual relationships, families, communities, and beyond. Furthermore, this embrace of sexual liberation can have ripple effects, influencing even macro-level systems. The lecture examined the links between cultural recipes around sexuality, issues of pleasure worthiness, consent, erotic equity, relationships, and broader social inequalities, suggesting practical implications and inspiring possibilities for research, education, and therapeutic practices aimed at promoting sexual health and a more just society. This talk is generously supported by the John W. Money Foundation each year.



Sex Science HAPPY HOUR

2025 was another successful year for the Sex Science Happy Hour series, with a lineup of incredible guests and engaging conversations with the community to digest the science of sex to the public. In this series, Dr. Kristen Mark

brings the science of sex to the community in an accessible setting. Our 2025 lineup included renowned sexologist, author of “American Couples” and “Rx Relationship,” television personality on “Married at First Sight,” and longtime supporter of the Eli Coleman Institute for Sexual and Gender Health, Dr. Pepper Schwartz! We also featured award-winning psychologist, associate professor, and author of “Good Sex” Dr. Candice Hargons. Sexuality journalist and author of “Tell Me What You Like” Katie Simon joined us in September, and former Randi and Fred Ettner Fellow and Eli Coleman Institute for Sexual and Gender Health Assistant Professor Dr. Shari Brightly-Brown was our November guest. Sex Science Happy Hour is not possible without the support of our 2025 community partners—Fulton Beer, Urban Growler, PAIKKA, and Moon Palace Books—who have generously provided space and sold books for us to make this series possible. Hear about future events and sign up for our newsletter at z.umn.edu/SSHH_signup



NATIONAL CENTER FOR GENDER HEALTH UPDATE

This year we celebrated the power of community, drawing on shared knowledge, lived experience, and collective vision to create meaningful change. Together, we uplifted community members as content experts and supported learners ranging from high school through post-doctoral fellowship as project and initiative leaders. Our collective efforts focused on building lasting capacity and advancing sustainable, community-led impact.

We translated this focus into tangible action through powerful partnerships and impactful co-hosted critical events. With the Volunteer Lawyers Network, Transforming Families, UMN Outlaw, and UMN Human Rights Center, we held Name and Gender Marker Change Legal Clinics. In partnership with Northside Healing Space and the MYST Collective, we led a social media advocacy campaign to challenge myths and promote facts about sex trading, exploitation, and trafficking. We also co-hosted hybrid policy briefings (see Advocacy section) and continued our 2SLGBTQIA+ Intergenerational Events featuring various topics and venues.

Our research amplified stories from across generations. We heard from young children (starting at five years old) to those who have wisdom that comes with years in order to identify ways to ask about gender in research and clinical work as well as to co-create actionable solutions to issues impacting community well-being. This work led to community workshops (e.g., Caregiver Education Night hosted by Transforming Families), practice-related trainings (e.g., Increasing Family Medicine Physician's Knowledge and Investment in Clinical Care and Research with TGD Children and their Families in collaboration with Family Tree Clinic's Midwest Trans Health Education Network), and public education efforts (e.g., social media campaign and YPAR convening with Northside Healing Space; Lunch and Learn with Dr. Lucie Fielding) that deepened understanding and awareness.

We also launched our new name, icon, mission, and vision, reflecting our commitment to lasting transformation. See them below:

Mission: To collaborate for sexual and gender justice by, for, and with transgender and gender diverse people by dismantling systemic barriers and advancing their health, equity, and well-being through intersectional research, translational scholarship, and dedicated advocacy.

Vision: A fundamentally transformed society where all transgender and gender diverse people achieve sexual and gender liberation and autonomous well-being, supported by equitable systems informed by intersectional research and affirming policy.



NATIONAL CENTER FOR GENDER HEALTH

WAS CONGRESS 2025

Every year, ISGH sponsors a featured plenary at the World Association for Sexual Health (WAS) Congress to invite a speaker who is doing meaningful work in sexual health as our honored guest. This plenary is generously sponsored by the John Money Foundation. This year, we sponsored Dr. Yu Na to present “The Application of Traditional Chinese Body Practices in Female Sexual Therapy” at the WAS Congress in Brisbane, Australia.



Photo: Dr. Eli Coleman, Dr. Yu Na, Dr. Nic Rider and Christine Zhang

Dr. Yu Na holds a Ph.D. in Human Sexuality from the Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality (IASHS). For the past two decades, she has dedicated herself to advancing women’s sexual health in China. She is the founder of Dr. Eros Group and MIA Wholecare Clinic, committed to integrating international cutting-edge sexology research with the practical needs of Chinese society, building a professional ecosystem that bridges research, education, and clinical practice.

The presentation by Dr. Yu Na at WAS introduced an integrative clinical model from China that applies traditional Chinese body practices in female sexual therapy. It also invites an intercultural dialogue on embodied sexuality, showcasing how traditional wisdom can enrich modern therapeutic contexts and empower female clients through integrated care.

ISGH AT PRIDE

ISGH faculty and staff volunteered at the annual PRIDE 2025 festival in Loring Park.



BEATRICE “BEAN” E. ROBINSON

ENDOWED CHAIR IN CLINICAL SEXUAL HEALTH



It is with great excitement that we announce that Chiara Acquati, PhD, LGSW, FAOSW, joined us in September 2025 as the inaugural Beatrice “Bean” E. Robinson Endowed Chair in Clinical Sexual Health within the Eli Coleman Institute for Sexual and Gender Health (ISGH) and tenured Associate Professor, Department of Family Medicine and Community Health, University of Minnesota Medical School.

Dr. Acquati is recognized for her scholarship at the intersection of psychosocial oncology, dyadic health research, and clinical sexual health. She joins us from the Graduate College of Social Work, University of

Houston, where she served as Associate Professor, Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Development, and Director of the DYADICARE Lab. Her work sheds light on how couples cope together through cancer and chronic illness. She has helped shape new ways to study and support people living with cancer, developing innovative approaches to address the emotional and sexual health needs of individuals and their partners. With over 50 peer-reviewed publications and sustained funding from the National Cancer Institute, American Cancer Society, and other scientific organizations, Dr. Acquati brings both scholarly distinction and a translational vision to ISGH.

“In this role, I aim to expand ISGH’s leadership in clinical outcome research, intervention development, and provider training to enhance assessment and treatment of sexual dysfunctions and to promote sexual health and well-being across diverse populations, including people living with cancer and other chronic illnesses,” said Dr. Acquati. “I am also deeply committed to mentoring the next generation of clinician-researchers and fostering stakeholder and community relationships that advance collaborative care.”

This appointment was made possible through the generosity of 101 individual donors, the Tawani Foundation, Dr. Eli Coleman, the Institute’s Leadership Council, and the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health.

“As the namesake of this Endowed Chair, I am moved and grateful to Eli and the many colleagues, friends, and my department whose generosity and vision made its creation possible,” said Dr. Beatrice “Bean” Robinson. “Throughout my career, I have witnessed how advancing sexual health and addressing sexual dysfunctions can transform lives. Knowing that this Chair will carry forward that mission fills me with pride and hope for the future of clinical sexual health.”



BEAN ROBINSON ENDOWED CHAIR

JOYCELYN ELDERS CHAIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

It has been a big year for our Joycelyn Elders Chair, Kristen Mark, PhD, MPH, who welcomed baby Felix into the world in January 2025. She took three months of parental leave and upon her return she took on the Interim Co-Director role for ISGH. All of this adjustment didn't slow down the education mission, as the graduate program has continued to grow. We've reached more medical students through the new curriculum and expansion to three campuses (Twin Cities, Duluth, and St. Cloud), and attracted growing crowds to ISGH education events. Dr. Mark led her study abroad program in June 2025 in Amsterdam NL that provides a cultural comparison of sex education between the USA and NL. Additionally, in September 2025, Dr. Mark was an invited guest at the inaugural World Sexual Health Assembly held in Porto, Portugal, detailed on page 13. And she has been hard at work with Education Specialist Michael Gendernalik to create an innovative "build your own adventure" sexual attitude reassessment (SAR) opportunity that will transform the SAR experience. This is shaped from ISGH's rich history of innovation in the SAR. With the help of generous donor funds, we have been able to feature ISGH expertise, hire a video editor, and develop a series of eight micro-SARs that will be stacked to create a SAR opportunity that is catered based on areas of desired growth.



Dr. Mark also became an AASECT Certified Sex Education Supervisor (CSE-S), the first in the state of Minnesota and only the 30th in the country. This has helped make our Advanced Sex Educator graduate program stand out amongst our competitors as we can offer supervision within the program.



Photo: Dr. Kristen Mark, Dr. Kevin Lang, and their son Felix Langmark

In her scholarly pursuits, Dr. Mark has significantly expanded her research program. She serves as the Principal Investigator on two NIH grants totaling nearly \$7 million and as a Co-Investigator on two additional NIH grants, also amounting to nearly \$7 million. Additionally, she remains dedicated to mentorship of fellows and students, and has successfully supported the pursuit of two internal grants, both of which were awarded in 2025. Her scholarship continues to be focused on improving sexual well-being with a focus on sexual pleasure and satisfaction, resilience beyond sexual trauma, sexual function and relationships, and improving sex education across the lifespan of communities, teachers, parents, and healthcare providers.





**Photo includes faculty and staff*

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Program Coordinator, Lifespan Gender Health
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Eli Coleman, PhD
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Co-Medical Director of MHealth Fairview
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Michael Ross, MD, PhD, MPH, MPHEd, MSt
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Katherine Spencer, PhD, LP, CST
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Director of Clinical Training
Program Coordinator, Relationship and Sex Therapy
Comprehensive Gender Care, Behavioral Health



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Isabel Ricke, Graduate Research Assistant
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Montana Filoteo, Research Professional
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SHARI BRIGHTLY-BROWN, PHD, JOINS ISGH AS FACULTY

We recently welcomed Shari Brightly-Brown, PhD, as an assistant professor after their graduation from the Randi and Fred Ettner Fellowship in Transgender Health. Dr. Brightly-Brown received their PhD in clinical psychology from the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Their primary clinical interests are in gender-affirming care and sexual health, with a passion for working with LGBTQ+ and BIPOC identified people.

Dr. Brightly-Brown's research interests are broadly focused on resilience among LGBTQ and BIPOC people, with a particular interest in understanding how the intersection of LGBTQ+ and BIPOC identities may contribute positively to mental health. As a faculty member at ISGH, they plan to extend this research to focus on the sexual health and pleasure for trans and gender non-conforming people.



"The transition from fellow to faculty has been a smooth one thanks to the support of all my colleagues at ISGH," said Dr. Brightly-Brown. "It's been great to be able to continue to do the work I love in an environment of people who are passionate about it and fully supportive of my learning and growth as a clinician and academic."

CELEBRATING MIKE ROSS' RETIREMENT



In December 2025, Mike Ross, MD, PhD, MPH, MHPEd, MSt, officially retired from UMN and moved into his role as an esteemed Professor Emeritus. Dr. Ross was the inaugural Joycelyn Elders Endowed Chairholder in Sexual Health Education. He has led a long and incredibly impressive career with an h-index of 90, an i-10 index of 463, and 28,995 citations of his work at the time of print. Dr. Ross will continue in his Emeritus role at ISGH, with active involvement in NIH grants in East Africa and beyond. Thank you, Mike, for your lifelong dedication to advancing the science of sexual health education worldwide!

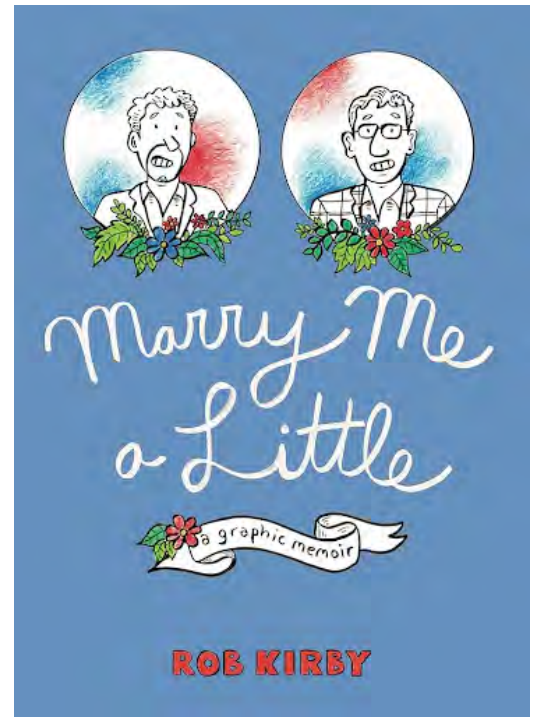


THANK YOU TO ROB

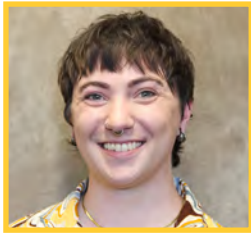
After 19 years with ISGH, in March 2025, we bid farewell to former Administrative Coordinator Rob Kirby. Rob moved on from his role at ISGH to focus on freelance writing, continuing work as a cartoonist, and visiting all 50 states (only two more to go!).

Rob's autobiographical graphic memoir, *Marry Me A Little* (published by Graphic Mundi, the Pennsylvania State University graphics imprint), recounts his marriage to his longtime partner after same-sex marriage was legalized in Minnesota in 2013. The book is a poignant exploration of the intersection of the personal and political in this time when the rights of the LGBTQ+ community are increasingly under threat. The book made *O, The Oprah Magazine's* Best Books of 2023 list.

Thank you, Rob, for all the years at ISGH!



WELCOME TO OUR NEW POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS



**Cole S. Morris, PhD,
MA**

Randi and Fred
Ettner Fellow in
Transgender Health
2025-2027



**Dasha N. Carver,
PhD, MA**

Michael E. Metz Fellow
in Couples' Sexual
Health
2025-2027

Welcome to Cole S. Morris, PhD (they/them), the new ISGH Randi and Fred Ettner Fellow in Transgender Health. Cole received their PhD in Counseling Psychology at Texas Tech University in the Department of Psychological Sciences in Lubbock, Texas, and their Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology and Master of Science Quantitative Psychology at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana.

Cole's clinical interests include the health and well-being of 2SLGBTQI+ community members, especially transgender and gender-expansive folks (TGE); culturally responsive and community-centered healing from various forms of trauma; sexual health after trauma experiences; culturally responsive and therapeutic approaches to psychological assessment, and working with folks experiencing chronic suicidality.

We also welcome Dasha N. Carver, PhD, MA (she/hers), the new ISGH Michael E. Metz Fellow in Couples' Sexual Health. Dasha received training at Saint Louis University School of Medicine (MA in family therapy, 2020: Saint Louis, Missouri) and Indiana University (PhD in counseling psychology, 2025: Bloomington, Indiana).

Dasha's clinical interests include sexuality science (e.g., sex positivity, BDSM/Kink, sexual pleasure for marginalized groups, healing from sexual trauma, sexual satisfaction across the lifespan, engagement in alternative sexual behaviors); relationship science (e.g., the impact of romantic, familial, and community relationships on the well-being and identity development within communities of color; relationship satisfaction within non-monogamous and interracial partnerships); and diversity science (e.g., conceptualizing the experiences of marginalized groups with emphasis on Black Americans, descendants of African descent, Indigenous Americans, and those who identify as Latine.)

ISGH postdoctoral fellowships are made possible through a combination of grant funding, clinical revenue, and philanthropic funds. Thank you to the many donors who have supported our learners by donating to the Doug Braun-Harvey Fellowship in Compulsive Sexual Behavior, Randi and Fred Ettner Fellowship in Transgender Health, and the Michael E. Metz Fellowship in Couples' Sexual Health funds.



LEARNERS

LEONOR DE OLIVEIRA, PHD, COMPLETES METZ FELLOWSHIP

Leonor de Oliveira, PhD, will have completed the two-year donor-supported Michael E. Metz Fellowship in Couples Sexual Health on January 21, 2026. The fellowship has provided high-quality training in sex and relationship therapy, with a focus on sexual dysfunction, relational dynamics, compulsive sexual behavior, and gender-affirming care across the lifespan. “My growth as a therapist has benefited immensely from working closely with my supervisors, in particular Drs. Jennifer Connor, Dianne Berg, Katie Spencer, and Ryan Rahm-Knigge, to whom I am immensely grateful,” said Leonor.



The fellowship has also supported Leonor’s development as a researcher in the areas of sexual and relationship boredom, sexual vulnerability and pleasure, and abortion support equity. “This work was made possible through the mentorship of Dr. Kristen Mark, whose guidance and generosity have been invaluable,” she said. “I am particularly proud to serve as co-principal investigator on a grant-funded project grounded in reproductive justice and community-based participatory research. I am excited to continue collaborating with my colleagues at the ISGH, and to continue to be inspired by their commitment to both sex and gender research.”

Thanks to the funding for this fellowship, Leonor has been able to disseminate her research internationally, including presentations at the International Academy for Sex Research in Berlin (2024) and the International Family Therapy Association Congress in Aberdeen (2025), where

she collaborated with Dr. Jennifer Connor. Both these experiences allowed opportunities for self-actualization, networking, and knowledge exchange, as well as seeing friends and family in Europe. Leonor shared that the experience was “not only heartwarming, but pivotal for my sustained adjustment in the US.”



She added: “Teaching in the HSEX program has also been a formative experience provided to me during this fellowship and I am excited to continue shaping future sexual health professionals and educators in my future international endeavors.

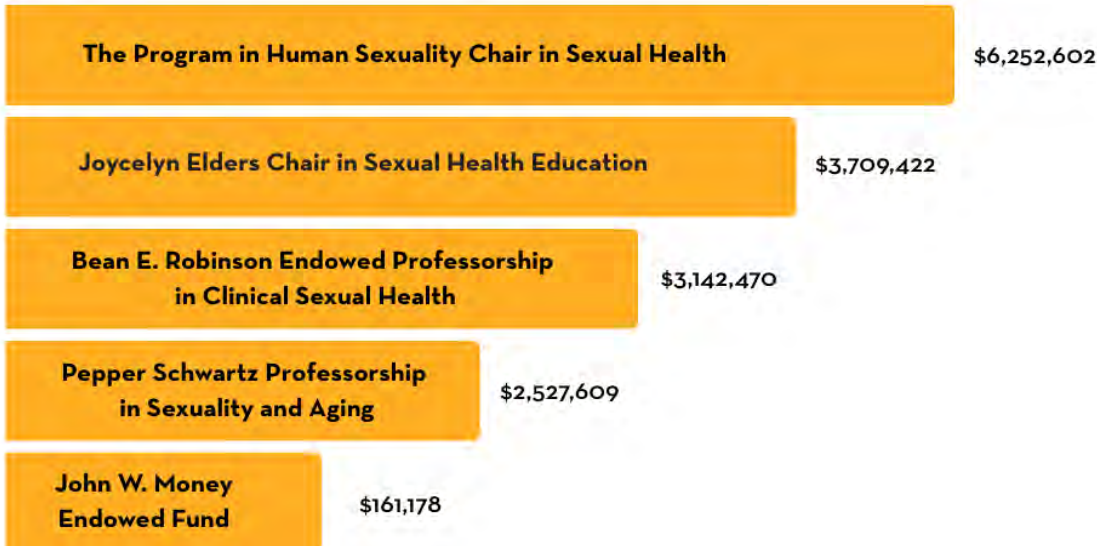
“This fellowship has further deepened my dedication to translating sex science and engaging in community outreach, now reflected in my new project, @theboredsexologist. Inspired by Minnesota’s natural landscapes and ISGH’s enduring legacy in sex research, this project blends academic rigor with creative expression. Its visual identity with earthy tones, minimalist design, and the deliberately ‘imperfect O’ embody the idea that there is nothing boring about studying human sexuality.”

To sum up her experience, Leonor added: “I did not have a dull moment during my fellowship, and I am proud to have served the community next to dedicated colleagues and friends, from front desk to leadership, who will continue to inspire me for many years to come.”

ISGH postdoctoral fellowships are made possible through a combination of grant funding, clinical revenue, and philanthropic funds. Thank you to the many donors who have supported our learners by donating to the Doug Braun-Harvey Fellowship in Compulsive Sexual Behavior, Randi and Fred Ettner Fellowship in Transgender Health, and the Michael E. Metz Fellowship in Couples’ Sexual Health funds.

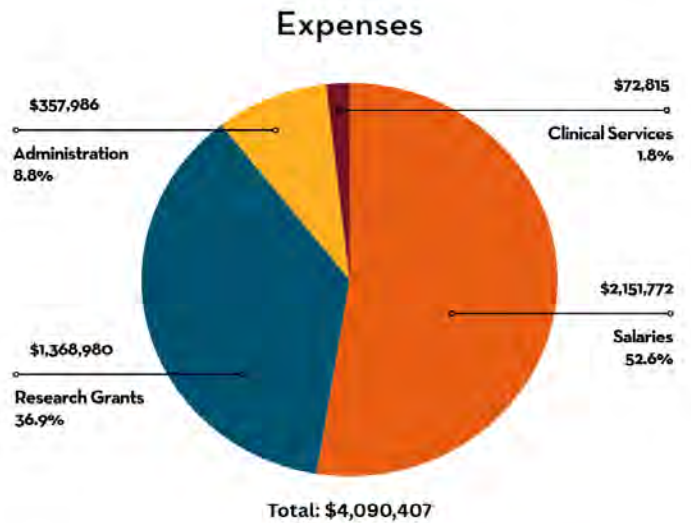
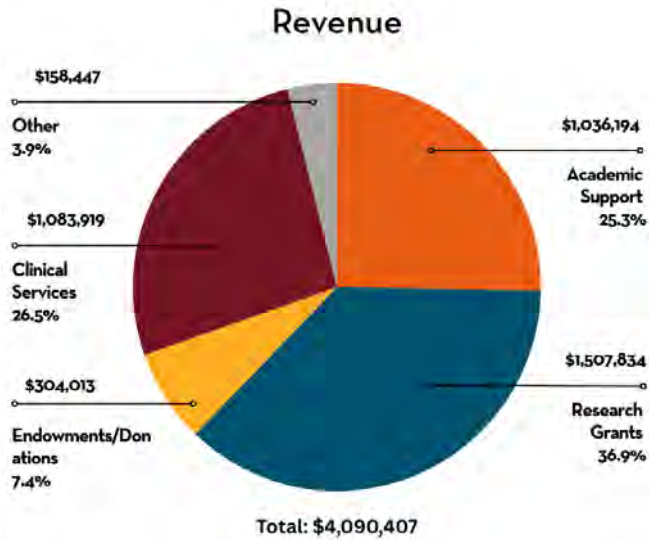


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