

# Nutrition News

Nutrition Consortium  
Discovery I  
921 Assembly St. Columbia, SC

## Arnold School of Public Health Researchers Attends the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Agriculture, Nutrition and Health Academy Week

BY JALENA JAMES

Nutrition Consortium-affiliated faculty, staff, and students made a strong appearance at the fourth annual ANH Academy Week, held in Hyderabad, India June 24-28. Several members of the Drivers of Food Choice Competitive Grants Program (DFC) team attended, including Dr. Christine Blake, Director of the Nutrition Consortium and principle investigator of the Drivers of Food Choice Competitive Grants Program, Dr. Ed Frongillo, DFC co-principle investigator, Dr. Andrea Warren, DFC research associate, and Shiva Bhandari and Krystal Rampalli, DFC graduate assistants.

The conference is organized by the [Leverhulme Centre for Integrative Research on Agriculture and Health \(LCIRAH\)](#) and the [CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health \(A4NH\)](#) and aims to foster knowledge exchange, innovation, and learning at the nexus of agriculture, nutrition, and health.

ANH Academy Week consists of Learning Labs (interactive and topically diverse research and professional development workshops) offered during a two-day pre-conference period followed by a three-day research conference.

Dr. Christine Blake, along with Dr. Ed Frongillo, Dr. Andrea Warren, Shiva Bhandari, and Krystal Rampalli, led a Learning Lab on Drivers of Food Choice research. Additionally, Nutrition Consortium affiliates Dr. Frongillo and Dr. A Warren co-led a second Learning Lab entitled “Building

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The DFC team and grantees pose for a picture



Implementation Science for Agriculture, Nutrition, and Health.” Dr. Frongillo also co-led a third Learning Lab entitled “Meaning of Linear Growth.” Dr. Blake also chaired a research session entitled “Food Environments and Drivers of Food Choice” during the research conference portion.

“ANH provides an opportunity to connect with the international agriculture, nutrition, and health community of practice, making it a wonderful platform for DFC grantees to disseminate their research findings and for our team at USC to connect with the audience for our ongoing and future synthesis work,” says Dr. Warren. “We found ANH 2019 to be as valuable and stimulating as ANH 2018 and are already looking forward to ANH 2020.”

### About the Participants

**Christine Blake, PhD, RD (Principle Investigator)** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Health Promotion, Education and Behavior at the Arnold School of Public Health. She is an international expert on food choice who has conducted both qualitative and quantitative studies on the drivers of food choice in diverse populations.

**Edward Frongillo, PhD** is a Professor in the Department of Health Promotion, Education, and Behavior at the Arnold School of Public Health. Dr. Frongillo is a global expert on household and individual food insecurity of adults and children and on infant and young child feeding, growth, and nutrition.

**Shilpa Constantinides, MPH** is a Doctoral Candidate at University of South Carolina, Arnold School of Public Health, whose research focuses on the food and nutrition policy and the double burden of malnutrition in India.

**Krystal Rampalli, MPH** is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Health Promotion, Education and Behavior. Her research interests are in the nutrition transition, food environments, food choices, and chronic diseases in low and middle-income countries, particularly among adolescents.

**Andrea Warren, PhD** is a research associate in the Department of Health Promotion, Education, and Behavior. Her research focuses on the implementation of food security and nutrition policies and programs, and she has led and contributed to research projects in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and the United States.

**Shiva Bhandari, MSC** is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Health Promotion, Education, and Behavior. The ultimate goals of his research are to promote food security and the accessibility of healthy foods in low and middle-income countries.

**Sydney Hankinson, BA** is the Communications Coordinator for the for Drivers of Food Choice and the Nutrition Consortium.



Dr. Andrea Warren (left) and Dr. Christine Blake give a talk at the 4<sup>th</sup> annual Agriculture, Nutrition and Health Academy conference.



## Affiliate Spotlight: Spencer Moore, Ph.D, MPH

BY JALENA JAMES

**Department:** Health Promotion, Education, and Behavior

**Length of time working at USC:** Since 2014

**How would you describe your nutrition research?**

My research in the nutrition sphere is twofold. First, my research examines the upstream social determinants of health and nutrition, with a particular focus on the role that social networks and relationships play in shaping food choices. Second, my work aims to design interventions that leverage social networks as a means of improving individual and household nutrition.

**What professional accomplishment(s), related to nutrition are you most proud of?**

I'm proud of a rather simple prevalence study on global fruit and vegetable consumption that I published with a master's student years ago. I am also proud of my contributions to a microentrepreneur-- and digital-based intervention in Odisha, India that aimed to improve the vegetable consumption of local farmers.

**What do you hope to see the Nutrition Consortium accomplish in 2019?**

I look forward to a continued focus on the social determinants of nutrition and the importance of population-level interventions in addressing national and global malnutrition.

**Random fun fact?**

I've built my own aquaponics system, but have yet to find the fish that I want for the system.



Spencer Moore, PhD, MPH

# BRIE Labs: The New Soul Study

BY SYDNEY HANKINSON



Dr. Brie Turner-McGrievy is the head of BRIE Labs, a program that “focuses on discovering ways to help people eat healthier, lose weight, and prevent chronic disease,” according to its [website](#). The New Soul Study is one of several that fall under the BRIE Labs umbrella. The study focuses specifically on African American adults at risk for cardiovascular disease.

The participants are divided into two groups at random-- one being the vegan group, and the other being the omnivore group. The vegan group is asked to avoid meat altogether, while the omnivore group is allowed a certain small amount of meat, egg yolks, and low-fat dairy each week. The purpose of the study is to see how returning to a more traditional African diet can benefit participants. Historically, diets in West Africa “were very plant-based. They were based around greens, yams, legumes. And so we emphasize that in our classes,” says Dr. Turner-McGrievy.

The study is in its second year, and some participants have experienced results such as significant weight loss, reduced cholesterol and lowered blood pressure. A few have even been able to stop taking certain medications altogether.

The classes for both groups are sometimes catered by local vegan soul food restaurants, such as a Peace of Soul, Rare Variety, Rawtopian Bliss and the Reizod Vegan Experience. I spoke to Folami Geter, chef and owner of a Peace of Soul, about vegan soul food. I mentioned one particular study participant who was initially less than thrilled at the prospect of having to give up fried chicken (which she had previously eaten every day) for the study. “You don’t have to give up anything, except the death [of the animal],” said Ms. Geter. “I have vegan fried chicken. Pretty much anything that can be prepared conventionally, can be prepared vegan... What’s most important—the fried chicken or being around for your children and grandchildren?”

“Vegan soul food is the true soul food,” Ms. Geter went on to say.

Although the results of the New Soul Study are still a couple of years away from being synthesized, Dr. Turner-McGrievy has high hopes for the future. “The goal of the study is to see if we can scale up this type of intervention through these types of restaurants throughout the US.” She says many such restaurants are already doing classes, and she would like to find a way to partner with them to “deliver this in a community setting.”



# Affiliate News and Accomplishments

BY SYDNEY HANKINSON

## Presentations:

- Dr. Orgul Ozturk presented at two different conferences:
  - At Ashecon in Washington DC:
    - “Free Lunch for All! The Effect of the Community Eligibility Provision on Academic Outcomes” (with John Gordanier, Breyon Williams and Crystal Zhan) (under review at Journal of Human Resources) [PAPER]
    - “Hunger Pains? SNAP Timing, and Emergency Room Visits” (with John Gordanier and Chad Cotti)[PAPER]
  - In the IHEA congress in Basel, Switzerland:
    - “Before the Lunch Line: Behavioral Economic Interventions for Pre-Commitment” (with Melayne McInnes, Christine Blake, Gabrielle Turner-McGrievy, Edward Frongillo) [POSTER]

## Other news:

- Dr. Brie Turner-McGrievy is looking for participants for a new Brie Labs Study on fasting for weight management. Take the screening survey [here](#).
- FoodShare South Carolina has introduced a new community volunteer program called NeighborShare, helping match community members who want to purchase food boxes but lack reliable transportation with volunteers who can deliver to them. View the press release [here](#).

*To highlight your nutrition-related research and practice in future Nutrition Consortium newsletters, please contact Jalena James at [jalenaj@email.sc.edu](mailto:jalenaj@email.sc.edu)*

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