



Training in Research on Alcohol use and its Consequences and Etiology (TRACE)
Program Handbook

1. Welcome & Overview

Welcome to the Rutgers NIAAA-funded T32 Postdoctoral Training Program: **Training in Research on Alcohol use and its Consequences and Etiology (TRACE)**. This interdisciplinary program is designed to provide training in the etiology and consequences of alcohol involvement across the lifespan. Situated within a multilevel developmental framework, the program emphasizes biological, psychological, and sociocultural influences on alcohol-related behaviors and outcomes.

This program supports the **recruitment of (2) postdoctoral associates annually** and provides each postdoctoral associate with **2 years of funding** (*second year is dependent on satisfactory performance in year 1*).

Trainees will be embedded within the **Rutgers Addiction Research Center (RARC)**, the largest comprehensive addiction research center in the U.S. RARC connects researchers across Rutgers campuses, schools, departments, institutes, and centers, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration.

The program is led by Training Director **Dr. Kristina Jackson** and supported by Program Manager **Emily Balcke**.

2. Faculty Mentors

The program features **16 core faculty mentors** and **5 supporting training faculty** with diverse expertise in addiction research. Mentors span career stages and disciplines, offering trainees a rich environment for professional growth and collaboration.

Core Faculty Mentors

Name	Rank	Department or Center	Research Interests
Alexandria Bauer, PhD	Asst Prof	GSAPP/CAS	Health disparities that burden Black/African American and other racial/ethnic minority populations; community-based participatory research (CBPR) strategies; intervention research
Sarah Brislin, PhD	Asst Prof	Psychiatry	Etiology and development of externalizing behaviors; translation to clinical care; neuroimaging; statistical genetics; psychometrics
Jennifer Buckman, PhD	Prof	Kinesiology and Health	Impact of biology and behavior's joint influence on substance use and treatment outcomes; allostatic theory
Yen-Tyng Chen, PhD	Asst Prof	Planning and Public Policy	Social-structural drivers of HIV and substance use; cannabis and alcohol use and co-use; multi-level methodologies; social networks; place-based methods; longitudinal and ecological momentary assessment studies; racial/ethnic minority populations
Tammy Chung, PhD	Prof	Psychiatry/CPBH	Pathways and predictors of the developmental course of alcohol and other substance use; mechanisms of alcohol treatment change; digital health assessment and intervention; social determinants of health
Angelo DiBello, PhD	Assoc Prof	GSAPP/CAS	Addictive behaviors and health; romantic relationships and substance use; alcohol-related social norms; college student substance use
Danielle Dick, PhD	Prof	Psychiatry	Interplay of genes and environment on patterns of alcohol use disorder and related substance use and behavioral disorders; gene identification; longitudinal studies; translation into personalized prevention and intervention programming
Samantha Farris, PhD	Assoc Prof	Clinical Psychology/Tobacco Institute	Mechanistic factors (anxiety, fear) influencing alcohol use and risk behaviors, women's health; ovarian hormones & affective dysfunction; real-time evaluation; tailored interventions

Denise Hien, PhD	Distinguished Prof	GSAPP/CAS	Post-traumatic stress and addictions; community-based participatory research
Kristina Jackson, PhD	Prof	Psychiatry	Developmental course of alcohol use in underage youth and emerging adults; individual and contextual mechanisms of influence underlying alcohol use and co-use
Anna Konova, PhD	Assoc Prof	Psychiatry/CCNP	Trajectories and predictors of substance use treatment and recovery; neurocomputational mechanism of craving, motivated learning, and decision making; cognitive computational modeling
Lia Nower, JD, PhD	Distinguished Prof	SSW/CGS	Gambling, video gaming, and other behavioral addictions; psychometric measurement; policy initiatives
Marilyn Piccirillo, PhD	Asst Prof	Psychiatry	Measurement-based clinical care; smartphone-based and person-specific analytic methods; precision medicine, mental health and SUDs
Jill Rabinowitz, PhD	Asst Prof	Psychiatry	Understanding individual (polygenic risk scores) & environmental antecedents of alcohol/other substance use progression across the life course to identify novel prevention and treatment targets
Jessica Salvatore, PhD	Assoc Prof	Psychiatry/CPHG/GENA	Association between social factors, close relationships, and alcohol and other substance use disorders across the lifespan; twin and family studies; longitudinal studies; genetically informed research design
Carolyn Sartor, PhD	Assoc Prof	Psychiatry	Refining etiological models of risky alcohol, cannabis, and nicotine use in the adolescent to young adult years to reflect variations within and across race/ethnicity and gender; identification of socio-environmental and familial influences on progression through stages of substance use

Supporting Training Faculty

Name	Rank	Department or Center	Research Interests	Support role
Fazil Aliev, PhD	Assoc Prof	Psychiatry	Statistical genetics; genome-wide association study analyses; genetic and environmental influences on substance use	Genetic analysis; data imputation; big data
Sally Kuo, PhD	Asst Prof	Psychiatry	Developmental psychology; psychiatric genetics; risk and protective factors influencing substance use across the lifespan; longitudinal studies	Longitudinal data analysis
Michele Pato, MD	Prof	Psychiatry	Mental health disorders; serious mental illness disparities; genomics work in schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, OCD; mental health-substance use comorbidity; large-scale genomic cohorts	Psychopathology; mental health comorbidity; genome-wide association studies; mentoring mentors and trainees
Margaret Swarbrick, PhD	Research Prof	GSAPP/CAS	Culturally responsive SUD intervention; racial and ethnic disparities in SU intervention design, implementation, and dissemination; partnerships with Black and Latinx community and faith-based leaders to address SUD disparities	Community engagement; community-based participatory research (CBPR)
Jill Williams, MD	Prof	Psychiatry	Treatment for tobacco use and co-occurring mental illness; policy and systems intervention; educating behavioral health professionals in substance use disorder treatment	Treatment; intervention; policy

3. Training Components

Training includes:

- (1) **Mentored research:** Faculty mentoring of specific research skills that are appropriate to the trainee's research project(s) and career goals primarily conducted by the primary mentor(s). Additionally, each trainee will select a secondary mentor who will be a researcher with similar substantive interests and, when appropriate, be at a different career stage than the primary mentor to provide complementary perspectives on career development.

- (2) **Fall core seminars:** Each Fall, program faculty will lead a Core Seminar course (2-hour seminar, 10-week course, 8 faculty presentations). Topics will be presented in the Fall on a bi-annual basis, with each trainee completing the full core series across the 2-year post-doc period.
- (3) **Spring activities:** The Spring seminar will involve structured activities including journal clubs, trainee presentations, and professional development panels.
- (4) **Workshops:** For first-year trainees, core seminars will be coupled with one-hour workshops pertaining to (1) methodology, statistical analysis, and data science, (2) grant development and grant writing, and (3) special topics.
- (5) **Ethical Scientific Conduct course:** Each trainee must complete the *Ethical Scientific Conduct* course in line with the plan for instruction in responsible conduct of research.

Trainees develop individual development plans and engage in interdisciplinary learning tailored to their career goals.

4. Grant Writing & Professional Development Opportunities

Trainees are expected to compete for extramural support (e.g., F32, K99/R00) at the end of their first year. The program offers a structured *Grant Development and Grant Writing* course led by Dr. Sartor, a mock grant review program managed by the RARC and Brain Health Institute, and access to pilot funding opportunities.

Professional development activities include conference attendance (e.g., attendance at Research Society on Alcohol is strongly encouraged), Rutgers-hosted retreats (e.g., RARC Fall Symposium; joint retreat with NIDA T32 Training in Addiction Research Program), as well as resources for science communication, leadership, mentorship, and career development.

5. Community & Culture

Rutgers offers a collaborative and supportive environment to support trainees. This program will offer individually tailored and less structured group training activities including collaborative work-in-progress (WIP), shared interest groups (SIG), writing clubs, and speaker series. The RARC and associated centers and institutes host events for trainees across institutes and centers. Program trainees will also be assigned a Near-Peer Mentor (assistant-level faculty or advanced post-doctoral trainee with pending grants/faculty positions) and have the opportunity to attend small events with early career researchers and postdocs. We also encourage trainees to take advantage of resources designed to support their well-being through Rutgers (e.g., Scarlett Well, Office of Postdoctoral Affairs) and the NIH Office of Intramural Training and Education.

6. Application Process

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis from September 15 – November 15 of each year with applications accepted on a rolling basis thereafter as spots are available. Interested applicants will submit a formal application including a CV, the names of 3 professional references, and a cover letter through a form hosted on the RARC website. Applications will initially be triaged by the Program Manager. Eligible applicants will be forwarded to potential mentor(s) for evaluation and next steps. Applications and feedback are then reviewed by the Training & Admissions Committee for final selection. Selection is based on professional merit, research potential, and alignment with program goals.

Eligibility: Applicants must meet the following criteria: (1) professional merit in the alcohol field as evidenced by quality of proposed or ongoing research study, publications/presentations, and related academic activities and scholarship; (2) potential to become an independent productive investigator; and (3) motivation to pursue a career in alcohol research. All fellows must be a United States citizen or a noncitizen national of the United

States or have been lawfully admitted for permanent residence at the time of appointment. Individuals on temporary or student visas are not eligible for support.

7. Contact & Resources

If you have questions about this program, please reach out to Program Director **Dr. Kristina Jackson** (kristina.jackson@rutgers.edu) and Program Administrator **Emily Balcke** (emily.balcke@rutgers.edu). We also welcome you to review the [program webpage](#).