

# student profiles

## Supporting a Broader View of Community Health Through Grant-Making for The California Endowment

**BEATRIZ SOLÍS** IS RELISHING HER NEW POSITION at The California Endowment – one that allows her to put into practice much of what she learned during separate stints as a master’s and doctoral student at the UCLA School of Public Health.

In March, as she was nearing completion of her Ph.D. in the school’s Department of Community Health Sciences, Solís was hired by the private statewide health foundation as Los Angeles regional senior program officer. In that role, Solís oversees and provides direction for the administrative and grant-making activities of the foundation’s Los Angeles-based program officers, who serve a region that encompasses Los Angeles, Ventura, Riverside and San Bernardino counties. Solís also serves as a member of the foundation’s statewide Community Health and

Elimination of Health Disparities Program Team, which seeks to improve the environmental factors that contribute to the poor health status of residents in low-income communities and to reduce the higher rates of health conditions and diseases among racial and ethnic groups.

The California Endowment, whose mission is to expand access to affordable, quality health care for underserved individuals and communities and to promote fundamental improvements in the health status of all Californians, has awarded more than 8,800 grants totaling nearly \$1.7 billion since it was established in 1996. For Solís, the attraction of the job was both in the opportunity to direct the foundation’s resources in ways that can make a significant impact on the health of populations in the region, and to do so in a way that takes a broad view of community health.

“This is cutting-edge philanthropic work that is engaging the community, taking risks, and trying to leverage support on many different levels – not only from the foundation world but from public dollars and the ability to bring together unlikely partners from different sectors,” Solís says. “It’s an organization that acknowledges the social

determinants of health, including the impacts that economic viability, availability of education, political will, and social capital have on the health of a community.”

After earning her M.P.H. from the school in 1996, Solís spent five years as a research associate for the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research. From there she went to L.A. Care Health Plan, serving as director of cultural and linguistic services. There, Solís developed one of the first departments dedicated to cultural and linguistic issues in a managed care setting. Rather than emphasizing health education, her department sought to identify and eliminate health-system barriers to diverse patients receiving the services they needed.

Solís left L.A. Care in 2005 to concentrate on her doctoral studies; for her dissertation, she conducted research on the topic of barriers to care for limited English-proficient patients among Medi-Cal managed care enrollees. “I am indebted to my professors, who pushed me to challenge myself and think out of the box,” she says. “They taught me about the importance of looking at the intersections of social determinants of health – understanding the nexus of all of those forces that affect community health, rather than thinking about public health in terms of silos.”



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