

Nosotros Team



David O Garcia, PhD, FACSM - Director, Nosotros Comprometidos A Su Salud; Director, Community Health and Outreach, Center for Health Disparities Research; Assistant Director of Community Outreach & Engagement, The University of Arizona Cancer Center

ACSM Clinical Exercise Physiologist
Assistant Professor, Health Promotion Sciences
Mel & Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health,
University of Arizona, University of Arizona Health
Sciences

Dr. Garcia is an Assistant Professor in the Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health at the University of Arizona. He has extensive experience in short and long-term intervention trials in the areas of physical activity, diet, and weight management. He received his training from leading institutions and mentors in the field. Since 2006, Dr. Garcia has worked on numerous funded research projects, including research funded by industry, National Institutes of Health (NIH) and foundations. This includes working as a lifestyle interventionist/exercise physiologist in several clinical trials with overweight and obese adults, morbidly obese adults (Class II and III obesity), and individuals with type 2 diabetes. Dr. Garcia also has received funding from the NIH to create a gender- and culturally-targeted weight loss intervention that focuses on relevant genetic and lifestyle risk factors of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) (e.g., dietary sugar consumption).



Rosi Vogel – Senior Program Coordinator

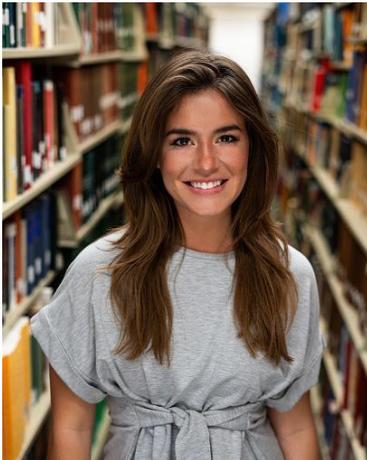
Rosi graduated from Universidad Anáhuac in Mexico City from the College of Business Management and Economics. Rosi is a certified health coach and has 16 years of experience in business management and community outreach. Rosi oversees the team operations and supports them in fulfilling their mission of reducing health disparities faced by the Hispanic community in Southern Arizona, through community-engaged research collaborations, service, and education. Rosi is responsible for community outreach and represents the team in many committees and boards. Rosi enjoys hiking, music and movies.

Edgar Villavicencio –Research Specialist



Edgar Villavicencio is currently a second year Master of Public Health student in the Health Behavior Health Promotion concentration at the Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health. Edgar is also a Research Specialist for Nosotros - Comprometidos a Su Salud. Edgar has extensive experience in recruitment and community engagement efforts, in addition to qualitative data methodologies including translation/interpretation work and conducting interviews in English and Spanish. Edgar's research interest encompasses a need to understand the root of health disparities in vulnerable populations and how to equitably diminish them. Other of his research interests include chronic disease prevention, physical activity, autism, border health, and community based participatory research.

Kristin Morrill – Graduate Research Associate



Kristin is a PhD Candidate in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at the University of Arizona (UA) in the Department of Nutritional Sciences. She obtained her Bachelors of Science degree in Molecular and Cellular Biology from the University of Illinois in Champaign, IL. For the past 3-4 years, Kristin has worked with Dr. David O. Garcia, her primary research advisor, under his research program ““Nosotros Comprometidos a Su Salud –Committed to Your Health.” As a part of Nosotros, she has served as the lead study coordinator for a beverage intervention for Hispanic adults (the VERDE study) and currently serves as the lead study coordinator for an on-going cross-sectional study (Liver Ultrasound & Nutrigenetic Assessment- LUNA) focused on

nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD). Kristin's dissertation harmonizes her interests in personalized nutrition and health disparities research and will involve examining potential interactions between high-risk genetic polymorphisms associated with NAFLD severity and progression and dietary factors in Mexican-origin women. Her dissertation also involves conducting qualitative research to explore knowledge and perspectives of NAFLD health risk, including genetic risk, and NAFLD risk messaging strategies. Addressing these questions represents a critical step in accelerating personalized NAFLD therapeutic interventions for this at-risk population. In her free time, Kristin enjoys cooking, hiking, and spoiling her two cats.



Melissa Lopez-Pentecost – Graduate Research Associate

Melissa Lopez-Pentecost is a Doctoral Student in the College of Medicine at the University of Arizona (UA) in Clinical and Translational Sciences. She obtained her Bachelors of Science and Masters of Science degrees in Nutritional Sciences from the University of Arizona. Melissa is currently involved in Dr. Garcia's LUNA study as well as his research program "Nosotros Comprometidos a su Salud - Committed to your Health". Melissa's research interests involve investigating lifestyle factors for cancer prevention and control among the Hispanic population through the study of the microbiome and metabolomics.



Jhenitza Raygoza - Graduate Research Assistant

Jhenitza Raygoza is a Native Tucsonan and a proud Sunnyside High School graduate. Jhenitza received her Bachelor's degree in Psychology from The University of Arizona and is currently working towards her Master of Public Health degree in Health Behavior Health Promotion at the Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health. During her time as an undergraduate student, she was involved in multiple health promotion and education efforts in the areas of mental health, minority health, and global health. These opportunities catalyzed her passion for public health services to underserved and underrepresented communities. Jhenitza is continuing to share her passion for public health by serving as a Graduate Research Assistant to Nosotros Comprometidos a Su Salud (Committed to Your Health) program to advance health equity.



Ricardo Montejano - Graduate Research Assistant

Ricardo is a graduate student at The University of Arizona working towards his Masters of Public Health with a Health Behavior Health Promotion emphasis. He is a UCLA SMDEP scholar and has worked under Dr. Jason Karnes' Cardiovascular Pharmacogenomics lab. Ricardo has competed in the Princeton MediHack competition, where he traveled to Princeton University and created an app called Social Service Informational Database (SSID). This app is meant to help social workers deliver simple updated health resources to patients via text messages as a way to keep the information they received with their social worker in their phone rather than on paper where it could potentially be lost. Ricardo has been a counselor for The University of Arizona's Medstart Health Careers Summer Program, where he mentored 41 senior level high school students that want to attend college and eventually have a career in the health field. Ricardo is currently a Graduate Research Assistant for Nosotros, where he fulfills his interest in public health and his desire to aid the underserved low-income Latino community. He has also been a Teaching Assistant (TA) for Dr. Garcia's HPS 178 class (Personal Health and Wellness) and is a current TA for Professor Monroy's HPS 387 class. His ultimate goal is to become a cardiothoracic surgeon, and with his knowledge of public health, help bridge the gap between low-income patients and achieving their optimal health. Ricardo also has a newly developed passion for bodybuilding and enjoys going to the gym, exploring new places to eat, and play with his dog, Boujee.



Rodrigo Valenzuela-Cordova - Graduate Research Assistant

Rodrigo Valenzuela-Cordova is a Native Tucsonan and a proud life-long Wildcat! Rodrigo received his Bachelor's degree in Public Health from the University of Arizona and is working to obtain his Master of Public Health degree, emphasis in Health Behavior Health Promotion, from the University of Arizona Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health. His current interests include minority and border health, mental health, health education and promotion, social justice, health advocacy, and research in metabolic diseases and cancer. Ultimately, Rodrigo would like to become a family physician to help address health inequities and advocate for his patients' and his community needs. Rodrigo has been involved in several efforts within his interests as an undergraduate and graduate student. These include volunteering for Juntos Por La Salud Primary Prevention Mobile Unit, L.U.C.H.A. (Learning, Understanding, and Cultivating

Dora Valencia - Graduate Research Assistant



Dora Valencia is a first-year Ph.D. student in the Clinical Translational Sciences program and a second-year graduate student in the Master of French program at the University of Arizona. She obtained her Master of Public Health (MPH) in Global Health from the University of Arizona in 2019. Dora completed her undergraduate career in 2017, obtaining her BSHS in Physiology, BA in French and Francophone Studies and a minor in Biochemistry also from the University of Arizona.

During her time as a Master of Public Health student, Dora interned at the National Institute of Argentina with funding from the Cancer Epidemiology Education in Special Populations (CEESP) fellowship and the University of Arizona. While in Argentina, Dora contributed to a survey research project designed to better understand how breast cancer patients navigate the country's healthcare system and to identify barriers to care. She also created an online education module to train NCI surveyors, located in various parts of Argentina, in surveying best practices and survey implementation strategies.

Dora's main research interests include cancer prevention, improving health outcomes of underserved populations, especially those of the Latino population, through education and equitable, patient centered care, and utilizing the human experience as portrayed in literature and in spoken language to strengthen health research and healthcare practices.



Jedzia Rodriguez – Undergraduate Research Assistant

Jedzia moved from Nogales, Arizona to pursue her education at the University of Arizona. She is in her senior year studying public health with an emphasis in health policy and administration. She currently works as an Undergraduate Research Assistant for Nosotros. Jedzia got acquainted with the network during her time as a student for one of Dr. Garcia's classes. She began

volunteering with recruitment efforts and data entry for the LUNA study. Jedzia hopes to one day be heavily involved in health policy reform and work alongside lawmakers to provide accessible and affordable health.



Juan Contreras – Undergraduate Research Assistant

Juan Contreras II is currently in his senior year at the University of Arizona. He is majoring in public health with an emphasis in health promotion and health education, as well as having earned a minor in Spanish. He has done research in emergency medicine and is working on publication. Currently, he also volunteers for Nosotros dedicating his time in community outreach events for LUNA where he recruits participants, as well as fulfilling other duties in the office. Juan's ultimate career goal is to go to medical school to pursue pediatrics. His hobbies include photography, traveling, and dancing.

Brenda Picasso – Student Research Assistant



Brenda graduated from the University of Arizona in 2016 with a Bachelor of Science in Public Health, and received a Graduate Certificate in Public Health in 2018 through the Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health (MEZCOPH) Online Program at the University of Arizona. She is currently working towards obtaining a Masters of Public Health (MPH) through the Online Program MEZCOPH program at the University of Arizona, with a focus on Health Promotions and Health Behaviors.

Brenda has been of assistance to the Nosotros team for three years in a variety of roles. She began doing transcription and translation work for one of our graduate students, and has now been heavily involved in our recruitment and clinical assessment efforts for the LUNA study. Brenda has decided to commit her work with the Nosotros team to the LUNA study as she will be utilizing that data as part of her MPH Internship project. Apart from attending school and working full-time as a Program Coordinator for a SNAP-Ed program known as AZ Health Zone, Brenda enjoys spending time with her family, exercising, and enjoying new foods and experiences.

Calli Townsend- Volunteer Research Assistant



Calli graduated from the University of Arizona in 2019 with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and a Bachelor of Science in Education. She is currently in her master's program at the College of Public Health with an emphasis in Health Behavior Health Promotion. Calli is a volunteer with Nosotros, where she assists the various projects being carried out by the organization and lends a hand with outreach events.