

DEPARTMENT OF EPIDEMIOLOGY AND BIOSTATISTICS

EPIBIO NEWS

FALL 2025

Welcome to the newest edition of our department newsletter. This issue features updates on recently awarded grants, upcoming seminars, and spotlights on the achievements of our faculty, vibrant student and alumni community.

CELEBRATING
FACULTY & STUDENT GRANTS

RESEARCH



Dr. Danielle Gartner

“A strengths-based curriculum for Tribal early childhood education to support lifelong health and wellness”

Sponsor: Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health & Human Development

Award amount:-- \$3.28 million

Project period: July 2025 - June 2030



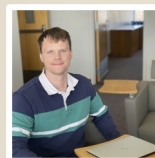
Dr. Claire Margerison

“Pregnancy-associated mortality and morbidity due to drugs, self-harm, and violence in the United States”

Sponsor: National Institutes of Health

Award amount:-- \$500,000

Project period: 9/30/2021 – 8/31/2027



PhD Student, Matt Myers

“An Investigation of the Neighborhood Density of Cannabis Outlets and its Effect on Traffic Crashes”

Sponsor: National Institutes on Drug Abuse

Award amount:-- \$45,128

Project period: 7/18/2025 – 7/17/2026



Retirement hasn't slowed this former Project Director's drive to make a difference

Bertha Bullen Named 2025 AIM Advocate of the Year

This June, Bertha was honored as the 2025 AIM Advocate of the Year at the Alzheimer's Impact Movement (AIM) Advocacy Forum in Washington, DC. AIM, the legislative advocacy arm of the Alzheimer's Association, annually recognizes one volunteer advocate from across the country for their outstanding contributions to the fight against Alzheimer's and other dementias.

As an AIM Advocate, Bertha meets regularly with both federal and state legislators to champion increased funding for dementia research and to support legislation that benefits individuals living with dementia and their families. She has served as AIM Ambassador to Senator Gary Peters, then-Representative Elissa Slotkin, Representative Tom Barrett, and currently to Senator Elissa Slotkin—engaging with them and their staff at least five times a year. She also maintains ongoing communication with her state senators and representative, ensuring that dementia-related issues remain a legislative priority.

Bertha's commitment to this cause spans more than 15 years of volunteer service with the Alzheimer's Association and AIM. Her contributions include facilitating caregiver support groups, advocating for research and caregiver legislation, serving on the Walk to End Alzheimer's planning committee, leading community education programs, and stepping in wherever help is needed.

Her advocacy is deeply personal. Bertha's initial motivation stemmed from losing her mother-in-law, grandmother, and mother to Alzheimer's disease. That passion has only deepened following the loss of her brother to dementia and her sister's recent diagnosis of Mild Cognitive Impairment due to Alzheimer's. For Bertha, staying involved is both a way to fight the disease and a path toward healing—transforming personal loss into meaningful action that uplifts others.



Dr. Bertha Bullen receiving her award from actor and AIM advocate, Diedrich Bader



Dr. Bertha Bullen joined the department in 1997 as Project Director for Dr. Claudia Holzman's Pregnancy Outcomes and Community Health (POUCH) Study and continuing in this role through 2016, directing several follow-up studies including the POUCHmoms Study. After retirement in 2017, Dr. Bullen continued working part-time with Dr. Holzman, assisting with POUCH data management and manuscript preparations until early 2020.

JOIN US

2ND ANNUAL CLAUDIA HOLZMAN SEMINAR IN WOMEN'S AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Thursday, October 23 | 3:00 PM

Penelope Howards, PhD | Emory University
"Reproductive Health among People with Chronic Conditions"

PATENGEE ROOM C102 FEE HALL

LEARN MORE



Dr. Honglei Chen

Current Hometown: Okemos, Michigan

Born and raised: Born in a small town in Hebei province, China, and raised in Tianjin, China.

Favorite Color? Blue sky and its clouds

Describe your current research or area of interest:

Parkinson's disease and dementia often take decades to develop, and by the time they are diagnosed, it is generally too late to intervene effectively. My research focuses on identifying who is at risk for these diseases, what factors contribute to that risk, how risk evolves over time, when early warning signs emerge, and how we might intervene to prevent or delay disease onset.

This interest has also led me to study poor olfaction — a common prodromal symptom of both Parkinson's disease and dementia—as a kind of “miner's canary,” signaling declining health in older adults.

What advice would you give to a student? Believe in yourself, work hard, find excitement, and stay positive!

[LEARN MORE](#) about Dr. Chen



Cody Makinson

Degree in Progress: **PhD Biostatistics**

Hometown: **Kissimmee, Florida**

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

Camping, Video Games, Poker

What inspired your interest in pursuing your degree?

I want to be a professor

What do you want others to know about this program?

It is a great mix of theory and application.

[LEARN MORE](#) about Cody





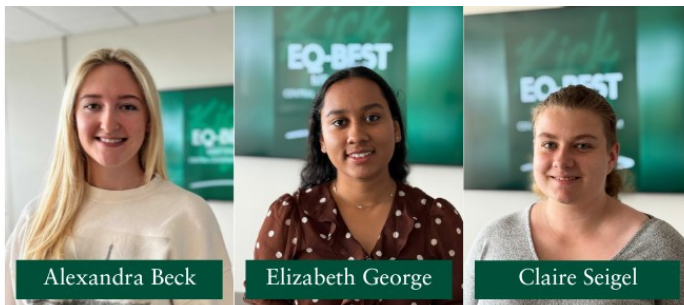
update

ALUMNI

Colleen MacCallum-Bridges (Epidemiology PhD in 2022) is currently a statistician in the Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology at the University of Michigan, working on an R01-funded project investigating the impacts of pandemic-era postpartum Medicaid eligibility extensions on maternal and infant health.

Her husband, **Mike Bridges** (Biostatistics MS in 2020), is a manager at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, using his analytic skills to optimize care delivery and reduce costs.

When not working, Colleen and Mike can be found rollicking around their East Lansing neighborhood with their 1-year-old son. Together, these three spend their days visiting with family, solving puzzles, pitting toy trucks against toy dinosaurs, and trying their best to decide once and for all whether raspberries are acceptable for consumption.



2025 EQ-BEST INTERNS

The EQ-BEST program is a part-time undergraduate internship program where Interns gain research experience and training outside the laboratory setting with department faculty on cutting-edge research that has an impact on peoples lives.

[Learn More](#)

NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

THE DEPARTMENT IS ACCEPTING **PHD** AND **MASTERS** APPLICATIONS FOR THE FALL 2026 ENTRY CLASS

Our Graduates

 Epidemiology and Biostatistics Graduates impact public practice at the local, state, national and international levels



BEAMS has exciting things coming up! Keep an eye out for details on our upcoming social event and swag sale in the coming weeks - and stay tuned for future emails from the [BEAMS team](#)!