

# 2023 UNCG/NCCE Engaged Scholarship Prize

Faculty Prize Awarded \$1,500  
Dane Emmerling, UNC-Chapel Hill



Dane Emmerling, PhD, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Health Behavior at UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health, is no stranger to the NCCE network, having spent a decade creating service-learning and engaged scholarship opportunities as a community engagement administrator and consultant for Duke Service-Learning and the Carolina Center for Public Service. He has presented his work in service-learning and engaged scholarship several times at the PACE conference and other NCCE professional development events. He has also been a leader in calling on the service-learning field to integrate social justice into pedagogy, partnerships, and the engaged products of our work, a point of view he expressed in a recent article he co-authored, "Designing Service-Learning to Enhance Social Justice Commitments: A Critical Reflection Tool."

When he decided to pursue a PhD in public health, Emmerling knew he wanted to conduct research that was engaged, participatory, and relevant to issues of health and justice in North Carolina and beyond. His research focuses on the possibilities for experiences and programs that shift individuals' and institutions' attitudes and behaviors about their participation in unjust systems. He ultimately seeks to gain evidence of effective interventions that raise the consciousness of public health practitioners and policy makers to recognize and eliminate health disparities.

One of the most common interventions in inequitable systems is diversity training for individuals within organizations; approximately 67% of organizations in the U.S. and 74% of Fortune 500 companies use diversity training. There is limited evidence of the effectiveness of these trainings, with previous studies including a mix of methodologically, weak positive findings and null effects. Further, most of these trainings focus on individual-level biases, but fail to explore the role of structural racism in health inequities, education disparities, the racial wealth gap, and disproportionality in criminal justice.

Over five years ago, to fill these gaps, Emmerling embarked on a community-based participatory research partnership (CBPR) with the Racial Equity Institute (REI), to evaluate their antiracism training and disseminate the findings. This research project included a qualitative

study of the perspectives of 15 REI trainers on the intended impacts of Phase I of the training and a quantitative test of those impacts using novel and validated measures of knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. Emmerling and his colleagues also completed in-depth interviews with 17 organizers from Race Matters for Juvenile Justice (RMJJ), which works to transform the juvenile justice system. They found that the REI Phase I training influences individuals' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. Collectively, these studies contribute to an emerging science of antiracism that reckons with the benefits and limitations of antiracism training as an intervention for individuals, organizations, and systems.

Emmerling's partnership with REI serves as an example of reciprocity and the trust-building needed to work effectively across the lines of race, gender, generation, and academic-community organizer. They used CBPR to build trust, increase transparency, share power and decision making, ensure mutual benefit, and improve the quality of data and research products. To formalize the focus and approach of our partnership, they wrote a Full Value Contract and a Memorandum of Understanding outlining the guiding principles and people to which this work would be accountable, ensuring that the process and outcomes of the work would be aligned with principles of antiracism. The MOU specified shared ownership between REI and UNC of all data and publications created through collaboration. Input from REI and our other community partner RMJJ was part of designing, implementing, analyzing, and writing up the findings from the research.

In addition to his published dissertation "A Participatory Evaluation of the Impact of Antiracism Training: Towards Methods and Measures of Individual, Organizational, and System Change," Emmerling and the CBPR team have discussed their partnership and disseminated their results in a variety of formats including symposia and guest lectures in several classes at UNC. Additionally, they are currently co-authoring three peer-reviewed articles for publication in Public Health journals. Community partners from REI are co-authors and co-creators of each manuscript. They are also currently working with a design firm to create a summary of their findings to be widely distributed to the thousands of people with whom REI works each year and beyond.