

## PRESS RELEASE

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### Aequitas Health Announces 2024-2025 Grant Recipients

Aequitas Health is pleased to announce the winners of its annual Chapter Project and Fellow Project Grants, supporting innovative initiatives to advance health equity across the United States by medical students and local Aequitas Health Chapters.

#### Fellow Project Grant Winners:

- **Megan McDonald (Medical University of South Carolina)**  
“FutureCare Directions: Empowering Patient Choices at Anderson Free Clinic”  
Project implements advanced care planning services at Anderson Free Clinic, ensuring underserved populations have access to comprehensive end-of-life care discussions and documentation. The initiative includes the development of patient education materials and provider training.
- **Joseph Rumenapp (Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science, Chicago Medical School)**  
“Mini-Medical School Family Engagement Program”  
Project expands the Mini-Medical School program, providing hands-on medical education to underrepresented elementary school students. The initiative includes take-home activities and bilingual materials to engage families in supporting their children’s interest in healthcare careers.

#### Chapter Project Grant Winners:

- **University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine (Narysse Nicolet)**  
“Rapid City Student Healthcare Outreach Program”  
Project focuses on establishing healthcare outreach services in Rapid City, South Dakota, targeting the city’s homeless population, of whom 75% identify as Native American. The initiative aims to lay the groundwork for a future student-run clinic and provide basic health services to an underserved community.
- **The Robert Larner, M.D. College of Medicine at The University of Vermont (Jasmine Bazinet-Phillips)**  
“CVHS UVMMC Vision Screening Program”  
Project addresses transportation barriers affecting vision care access for young children through Champlain Valley Head Start. The initiative will utilize Uber Health to improve follow-up rates for pediatric ophthalmology appointments, where currently only 33% of children under age three and 62.3% of children ages 3-5 attend follow-up care. The program particularly targets improving access for the youngest children, aligning with research recommendations for early amblyopia detection.

### Additional Distinguished Finalists:

#### Fellow Project Grant Finalists:

- Neha Basti & Jessica Moreno (Chicago Medical School at Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science, Chicago Medical School) - Student-Run Clinic Food Pantry
- Aduago Chikezie (University of Vermont Larner College of Medicine) - MindRight Health Mental Health Coaching
- Karena Nguyen (University of Vermont Larner College of Medicine) - Look at Larner, Next Network MCAT Preparation Program

#### Chapter Project Grant Finalists:

- Medical University of South Carolina (Cayla Wakser) - Period Poverty Initiative
- Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine (Azziza Bankole) - Spanish Language Patient Portal Access

Project summaries will be published in the *Aequitas Health Journal*, showcasing these innovative approaches to addressing healthcare disparities. “These outstanding medical students represent the next generation of physician leaders in health equity,” said Dr. Hsu, President and Chair of Aequitas Health. “What’s particularly inspiring is how each project demonstrates a deep understanding of local community needs and creates sustainable solutions. From addressing homelessness in South Dakota to improving pediatric vision care in Vermont, these future physicians are already making meaningful changes in their communities. Their work exemplifies how physician-leaders can be powerful catalysts for reducing health disparities at the local level while developing models that can be adapted nationwide.”

### About Aequitas Health:

Aequitas Health is a national medical honor society founded in 2021 that recognizes and supports medical students dedicated to advancing health equity. Through its network of established chapters at medical schools across the United States, Aequitas Health works to foster future physician leaders committed to eliminating healthcare disparities and promoting equitable access to care.

The organization supports local chapter initiatives and individual fellow projects through grants, an annual virtual conference, and opportunities to publish in the *Aequitas Health Journal*. Chapters induct up to 10% of each graduating class, selecting fellows based on their demonstrated commitment to addressing health inequities while in medical school. Through mentorship, project funding, and a collaborative network of like-minded physicians-in-training, Aequitas Health works to build a healthcare workforce equipped to serve all members of society equitably.

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