July 27, 2021

Professor Mario De La Rosa’s career has been dedicated to addressing factors creating health disparities among minorities. As such, I am pleased to announce the appointment of Mario De La Rosa, Ph.D., as an Endowed University Professor in Health Equity. This endowment is supported by the NIH $9.5M endowment award that has helped to establish a robust health disparities research and training program at FIU.

Dr. De La Rosa joined FIU in August 1999 and is a professor with dual appointments at FIU’s Robert Stempel College of Public Health and Social Work and the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine. He is also Director of the Center for Research on U.S. Latino HIV/AIDS and Drug Abuse (CRUSADA) at FIU. Dr. De La Rosa also served as visiting scholar at the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies at Harvard University. He is a past member of the National Advisory Council on Minority Health and Health Disparities of the National Institutes of Health, as well as the Health Equity Roundtable of the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine. In addition, Dr. De La Rosa has served on numerous NIH national scientific review panels and scientific journal editorial boards.

Dr. De La Rosa was born in Barranquilla, Colombia, and immigrated to the United States when he was 14 years old. He holds a doctorate degree in Social Work from Ohio State University, a master’s degree in Applied Social Science from Case Western Reserve University, and a bachelor’s degree in Political Science with a minor in Latin American history from the State University of New York at Oswego. He has been continuously funded by the National Institutes of Health and received a prestigious $9.5M endowment award that has helped establish a robust health disparities doctoral program of research at the FIU Stempel College of Public Health and Social Work. Since 2004, Dr. De La Rosa has been the Principal Investigator (PI) at a National Institute on Minority Health and Disparities (NIMHD) Exploratory Center of Excellence that focuses on substance abuse and HIV risk behaviors of Caribbean Latino populations. He is also the PI of a current R01 research study focusing on the cultural and social determinants of HIV risk behaviors and substance abuse among adult Latinas, funded by the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR).

His research focuses on Latino substance abuse, substance use as a risk factor for HIV/AIDS, violence, delinquency, and cross-cultural issues as well as on building a program of training in health disparity research at FIU. The scientific community has widely acknowledged the findings from his research as advancing our understanding of the influence that social determinants of health (including family support, acculturation-related stress, and negative pre-immigration factors) have on the drug-using and HIV risk behaviors of adult Latina immigrants, recent young adult Latino immigrants, and Puerto Rican and Dominican gang members. As a testament to his research contributions, he received in 2013 the National Award of Excellence in Research by a Senior Investigator from the National Hispanic Science Network on Drug Abuse, joining only a handful of researchers who have received this award from one the most prestigious networks of Hispanic behavioral and biomedical scientists in the country. He has published 170 peer-reviewed publications on the etiology of drug use and related consequences in Latino
and other minority populations. He has presented or co-presented more than 150 poster and oral presentations in some the nation’s most recognized substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, and health disparities conferences.

Dr. De La Rosa is also an outstanding mentor. He has chaired 10 doctoral dissertation committees and served on 24 other dissertation committees, all of which have received their doctoral degrees from FIU. He demonstrates exceptional commitment to mentoring doctoral students and postdoctoral fellows and assists them in obtaining funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and other funding sources. Nine of his doctoral mentees have been awarded the Ruth L. Kirschstein National Institute of Health (NIH) Predoctoral Fellowship to Promote Diversity in Health-related Research. Four of the five postdoctoral fellows have been awarded a K99, K01, R01 grants from NIH.

Please join us in congratulating Mario on this illustrious endowed professorship. We look forward to Mario’s continued contributions to FIU in our continued efforts to ameliorating health disparities.

Tomás R. Guilarte, Ph.D.
Dean, Robert Stempel College of Public Health & Social Work

Andrés G. Gil, Ph.D.
Senior Vice President for Research & Economic Development, &
Dean of the University Graduate School