

Health Reform and Climate Change: Policy Reforms to Improve Health System Sustainability and Population Health

October 1, 2025 | 9:30 AM – 3:45 PM ET

Hybrid Virtual/In-Person Symposium

Fuqua School of Business, Durham, NC

Speaker Biographies



Jessica Castner serves as 2025-26 Climate Leader in Residence at Duke University as a distinguished expert in nursing leadership and health policy. As the National Academy of Medicine's 2021-22 Distinguished Nurse Scholar in Residence, Castner contributed to evidence-based policy development at the federal level related to climate change, disasters, environmental health, clinician wellbeing, and artificial intelligence applications. Dr. Castner joins Duke University as President of Castner incorporated, a woman-owned small business research institute and as University at Albany tenured faculty, where she was awarded the rank of full Professor. As the

inaugural Director of Nursing at the University at Albany, Castner led the opening of a new academic unit with graduate and undergraduate programs. With an internationally renowned reputation for expertise, scholarship, and leadership in emergency and environmental health nursing, Castner's trajectory has attracted funding support from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Science Foundation (NSF), American Nurses Association, American Nurses Foundation, American Academy of Nursing, Emergency Nurses Association Foundation, Emergency Medicine Foundation, Heilbrunn Family philanthropy through Rockefeller University, Patricia Garman Endowment, and other foundations. Castner's research impact centers on multi-level environmental and contextual determinants of emergency health outcomes. Widely published in nursing and interdisciplinary peer reviewed journals, Castner served as the Editor in Chief of the Journal of Emergency Nursing during the COVID-19 public health emergency. In 2025, Castner was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Thoracic Society's Terrorism and Inhalation Disaster section.



Stephen Colvill is an Assistant Research Director at the Duke-Margolis Institute for Health Policy, where he leads the Duke-Margolis ReVAMP Drug Supply Chain Consortium and policy work on other supply chain and biomedical innovation topics. Stephen is also a board member for the End Drug Shortages Alliance and a volunteer advisor for Angels for Change, and he frequently speaks at national forums on pharmaceutical supply chains, drug shortages, pharmaceutical regulation, and biomedical innovation. Stephen previously served in the White House Domestic Policy Council as Senior Policy Advisor for Medical Supply Chains. He also co-founded RISCs, a nonprofit drug supply chain rating and certification organization with a mission to prevent drug shortages, and held various roles at Pfizer and Hospira in business analytics, supply chain, manufacturing, finance, marketing, and commercial portfolio management.



Victor Dzau is President of the National Academy of Medicine, Vice-Chair of the National Research Council, Chancellor Emeritus of Duke University, and past CEO of Duke Health System. Previously, he was Professor and Chairman of Medicine at both Harvard and Stanford Universities. Dzau is recognized globally for a long and highly decorated career as a scientist, administrator, and leader. His research laid the foundation for development of lifesaving drugs known as ACE inhibitors, used globally to treat high blood pressure and congestive heart failure. During Dzau's tenure, the NAM has launched important initiatives including the Global Health Risk Framework, the Human Genome Editing Initiative, the Action Collaborative on Clinician Well-Being and Resilience, and the Healthy Longevity Grand Challenge. In 2020, the NAM launched the Grand Challenge on Climate Change, Human Health, and Equity, a multi-year global initiative to improve and protect human health, well-being, and equity by working to transform systems that both contribute to and are impacted by climate change. In 2021, Dzau inaugurated the NAM Action Collaborative on Decarbonizing the Health Sector, bringing together leaders to develop and implement strategies to reduce the health sector's carbon footprint and strengthen resilience. A leader in global health, Dzau launched the Duke Global Health Institute and Duke-NUS Medical School in Singapore, founded the Division of Global Health Equity at Harvard, and chairs the International Advisory Board of McGill's School of Population and Global Health. Among other activities, he serves on WHO and World Bank's Global Preparedness Monitoring Board, is co-chair of G20 Scientific Panel on Global Health Security, and was on the board of the Coalition of Epidemic Preparedness and Innovation. He leads the World Economic Forum Regional Vaccine Manufacturing Collaborative and is co-chair of the Science and Technology Expert Panel for the 100 Day Mission Independent Pandemic Preparedness Secretariat.



Bill Frist is the Chair of The Nature Conservancy's Global Board of Directors. Senator Frist is a nationally acclaimed heart and lung transplant surgeon, former U.S. Senate Majority Leader, founding partner of Frist Cressey Ventures and chairman of the Executives Council of the health service investment firm Cressey & Company. He is actively engaged in the business as well as the medical, humanitarian and philanthropic communities. He is founder and chairman of SCORE, a statewide education reform organization that has helped propel Tennessee to prominence as a K12 education reform state, the global health non-profit Hope Through Healing

Hands and the regional community health collaborative NashvilleHealth (which has co-led a major citywide initiative to plant half a million trees by 2050). As a U.S. Senator representing Tennessee from 1994 -2007 (the first practicing physician elected to the Senate since 1928), Senator Frist served on both the Health (HELP) and the Finance Committees responsible for writing all health legislation. He was elected Majority Leader of the Senate, having served fewer total years in Congress than any person chosen to lead that body in history. His leadership was instrumental in the passage of the 2003 Medicare Modernization Act and the historic PEPFAR legislation that provided life-saving treatment globally to more than 20 million people and reversed the spread of HIV/AIDS worldwide. He also held seats on the Foreign Relations Committee, where he chaired the Subcommittee on Africa, the Commerce Committee and the Banking Committee. He served six years with President Clinton and six years with President Bush. Honoring his pledge to serve just two terms, he left the Senate and his position as Majority Leader in 2007.



Coral Giovacchini is an Assistant Professor of Medicine and Interventional Pulmonologist within the Division of Pulmonary & Critical Care Medicine in the Duke University Health System. Dr. Giovacchini currently serves as Director of Operations for Interventional Pulmonology within the Duke Health System, as well as the Director of Bronchoscopy and Interventional Pulmonology at Duke Raleigh Cancer Center leading the development and expansion of the program at the Duke Raleigh site. Dr. Giovacchini practices at several locations within the Duke Health System, and leads the pulmonary based clinical research enterprise at the Duke Raleigh site

and holds the position of PI on several clinical research and industry lead trials at Duke University Hospital. As a practicing interventional pulmonologist within a high level academic program, Dr. Giovacchini currently focuses on procedural pulmonary medicine. Working within a large academic health system, Dr. Giovacchini also focuses on the medical education of both general Pulmonary & Critical Care fellows and Internal Medicine residents, as well as the overall larger academic mission with several current grant awards for ongoing research in Pulmonary Medicine and Procedural Medicine. Additionally, Dr. Giovacchini has a special focus in sustainable

healthcare practices and as director of several high volume procedural suites, has grant funding for several ongoing projects focusing on reducing waste, improving efficiency and transforming materials used in procedure suites and operating rooms.



William Hathaway has spent more than two decades working to improve health across Western North Carolina as a MAHEC board member, chief medical officer for the region's largest hospital system, a practicing cardiologist, and now as our chief executive officer. In all of these roles, Dr. Hathaway's commitment to equity and improving access to healthcare has been a principle that has guided his health transformation efforts. Dr. Hathaway has championed the expansion of MAHEC's graduate medical education programs and hospital-based services to ensure we are developing the healthcare workforce necessary to promote the well-being of all those living in our region including our rural and under-resourced communities. Dr. Hathaway is keenly aware that individual and community health are influenced by an array of social, economic, and environmental factors. He has devoted much of his professional and personal time to addressing these social determinants of health by developing robust community partnerships and serving on a variety of regional boards including the United Way of Asheville and Buncombe County, YMCA of Western North Carolina, and the Economic Development Coalition for Asheville-Buncombe County. A longtime supporter of MAHEC, Dr. Hathaway is proud of MAHEC's commitment to patient care, serving the underserved, and educating the next generation of healthcare workers. He is grateful for the opportunity to guide our not-for-profit's efforts to meaningfully improve the health and wellness of all those who live and work in Western North Carolina.



Nishad Jayasundara is the Juli Plant Grainger Assistant Professor of Global Environmental Health at Duke University's Nicholas School of the Environment, with secondary appointments at the Duke Global Health Institute and the School of Medicine. His interdisciplinary research bridges environmental toxicology, organismal physiology, and population health to investigate how chemical contaminants and climate-related stressors impact kidney health. His current research include National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences supported studies on the effects of metal mixture toxicity and mitochondrial dysfunction on kidney development, investigating mechanisms of low-grade kidney injury caused by heat and chemical exposures, and developing early biomarkers of kidney damage in children and adults living in heat-affected agricultural communities. Through community-engaged citizen science, his research aims to strengthen environmental risk assessment and inform interventions that promote global health equity in the face of environmental change. Dr. Jayasundara earned his Ph.D. from Stanford University, CA where he focused on heat stress physiology, and completed his postdoctoral training at Duke University. Dr.

Jayasundara has authored more than 70 peer-reviewed publications and was named as a Kavli Fellow by the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, recognizing his contributions as an outstanding early-career scientist.



Kody Kinsley served as North Carolina’s 18th Secretary of Health and Human Services under Governor Roy Cooper, unanimously confirmed by the North Carolina Senate. Throughout his tenure, he focused on making health care more affordable and accessible for all North Carolinians, including those in underserved, overlooked rural areas. Kinsley played a pivotal role in expanding Medicaid through bipartisan collaboration with the General Assembly, resulting in over 600,000 North Carolinians gaining coverage in the first year—twice the expected pace. He secured one of the largest behavioral health investments in state history—\$835 million— and major policy reforms to expand access to mental health and substance use services. He implemented North Carolina’s groundbreaking Health Opportunities Pilots — the nation’s first large-scale experiment proving that paying for non-medical health needs, like food and housing improves health and lowers cost. In partnership with all of the state’s hospitals, Kinsley provided \$4 billion in medical debt relief for 2 million North Carolinians. His career includes roles at the White House, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Department of the Treasury, where he was appointed by President Barack Obama and continued under President Donald Trump as Assistant Secretary for Management. Secretary Kinsley currently serves as a Senior Policy Advisor at Johns Hopkins University, Senior Advisor with the Milken Institute, a fellow of the Aspen Institute, and serves on numerous boards. A native of Wilmington, Kinsley is a first generation college student and resides in Raleigh with his partner, where they hike frequently with their dog. is a nationally recognized health policy leader, executive, and presidential appointee. Serving as North Carolina’s 18th Secretary of Health and Human Services under Governor Roy Cooper, he was unanimously confirmed by the North Carolina Senate. In 2023, Kinsley played a pivotal role in expanding Medicaid in the state, collaborating with the Republican-led General Assembly to extend health coverage. This effort resulted in over 600,000 North Carolinians enrolling within the first year—twice the anticipated pace. His leadership fortified the state’s healthcare system, reduced costs for families, and provided critical support to rural communities. Kinsley has been a driving force in reshaping behavioral health in North Carolina. Under his leadership, the state secured an unprecedented \$835 million to enhance mental health care and substance use disorder treatment. A steadfast advocate for fairness, Kinsley has championed reforms addressing systemic health disparities. A Wilmington, NC native and first-generation college graduate, Kinsley earned a Bachelor’s degree from Brevard College and a Master of Public Policy from the University of California, Berkeley. His distinguished career spans senior roles at the White House, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Department of the Treasury. Appointed by President Barack Obama as Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Management, he continued in the role under President Donald Trump. Kinsley is a fellow of the Aspen Institute’s Civil Society

Fellowship and serves as an Adjunct Professor at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. His enduring commitment to public service and innovation continues to shape the future of health policy and leadership.



Jennifer Lawson is a Clinical Associate in Pediatrics at Duke General Pediatrics and Adolescent Health and a faculty associate of the Trent Center for Bioethics, Humanities, and History of Medicine at Duke University. Her interests include climate change and health; medical humanities; culture and belonging; and physician well-being. She appreciates working with interprofessional partners in these arenas. Most recently she was part of a team launching a Coursera course on Climate Change and Health and is active in this area of education. Dr. Lawson is a general pediatrician with interests in integrative medicine and whole person well-being inclusive of patients and colleagues, from students to faculty. Dr. Lawson has an ‘ecological’ perspective and approach to care, which seeks to understand and consider the whole person.



Mark McClellan is Director and Robert J. Margolis, M.D., Professor of Business, Medicine and Policy at the Duke-Margolis Institute for Health Policy at Duke University. He is a physician-economist who focuses on quality and value in health care, including payment reform, real-world evidence and more effective drug and device innovation. At the center of the nation’s efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, the author of COVID-19 response roadmap, and co-author of a comprehensive set health policy strategies for COVID vaccines, testing, and treatments, Dr. McClellan and his Duke-Margolis colleagues are now focused on health policy strategies and solutions to advance the resilience and interconnectedness of 21st Century public health and health care. Mark is a former administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and former commissioner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, where he developed and implemented major reforms in health policy. Dr. McClellan is an independent board member on the boards of Johnson & Johnson, Cigna, Alignment Healthcare, and Prognom IQ; co-chairs the Guiding Committee for the Health Care Payment Learning and Action Network; and serves as an advisor for Arsenal Capital Group, Blackstone Life Sciences.



Susan Mims currently serves as President and CEO of Dogwood Health Trust, a private foundation focused on improving the health and wellbeing for the people and communities in western North Carolina through upstream and equitable investments in the conditions driving health including housing, education, economic opportunity and wellness. Dogwood's work is anchored in being community-focused in all that we do and viewing equity as a means and end for our work. Dr. Mims practiced public health and pediatrics for nearly 30 years in a variety of settings including local public health, a children's hospital and healthcare graduate medical and other health professions education. She received her MD and MPH degrees and training in Pediatrics, Internal Medicine and Preventive Medicine at UNC in Chapel Hill. Dr. Mims is active in national, state and regional community organizations and is grateful to call Western North Carolina home.



Thomas Owens is Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Duke University Health System. With more than two decades of experience at Duke Health, Dr. Owens serves as the principal senior leader overseeing health system operations, working with enterprise leaders across Duke Health to deliver outstanding clinical outcomes and remarkable patient experience across Duke's network and the full continuum of care, from the hospital to ambulatory settings to care in homes and the community. In his previous role as Senior Vice President, Dr. Owens managed DUHS-employed physicians, Duke Primary Care, Duke HomeCare and Hospice, Graduate Medical Education, population health management programs, and payer value-based contracts through Duke Connected Care. As President of Duke University Hospital, our academic medical center was consistently ranked as North Carolina's No. 1 hospital for quality. In 2021, he and his DUH team opened the 350-bed, Duke Central Tower. In 2020, Dr. Owens played a critical role in leading DUHS's COVID response, collaborating with state government officials, operational leaders and frontline team members to care for our community, patients, and team during the pandemic. In partnership with colleagues in the Private Diagnostic Clinic, community practices and the Duke University School of Medicine, Dr. Owens served as DUHS's lead executive in planning the Duke Health Integrated Practice, projected to open July 1, 2023.



Jonathan Perlin became the seventh President and Chief Executive Officer of the Joint Commission enterprise on March 1, 2022. The Joint Commission enterprise includes Joint Commission, Joint Commission International (JCI), and the National Quality Forum (NQF). Previously, as President, Clinical Operations, and Chief Medical Officer, HCA Healthcare, Dr. Perlin led clinicians, data scientists and researchers in developing a learning health system model for improving care at the system's 189 hospitals and 2,200 other locations. His team's work achieved national recognition for preventing elective pre-term deliveries, reducing maternal mortality,

using artificial intelligence to improve sepsis survival, and developing public-private-academic partnerships for improving infection prevention and treating COVID-19. Dr. Perlin's CHARGE consortium partnered HCA, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, and academia to create a reusable platform for accelerated research using real-world evidence from the care of over 400,000 COVID inpatients. Before HCA, Dr. Perlin was Under Secretary for Health in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), where he led the Veterans Health Administration to national prominence for full implementation of a national electronic health record and benchmark clinical performance. He has served on numerous federal commissions, including as a Congressional Budget Office Health Advisor, a member of MedPAC (Medicare Payment Advisory Commission), and as chair of the VA Special Medical Advisory Group. An elected member of the National Academy of Medicine (NAM), he has co-chaired NAM action collaboratives on digital health, combatting opioids and sustainable healthcare.



Michael Pignone is Professor of Medicine and Inaugural Vice Chair of Quality and Innovation the Department of Medicine at the Duke University School of Medicine. He also serves as Faculty Director of Primary Care Transformation at the Margolis Institute for Health Policy, Director of Cancer Screening Equity within the Duke Cancer Institute and holds an American Cancer Society Clinical Research Professorship. Prior to coming to Duke, he was the inaugural chair of Department of Internal Medicine at the Dell Medical School of the University of Texas- Austin and held the Lowell Lebermann Endowed Chair. He also served as the founding director of cancer prevention

and control for the LiveStrong Cancer Institutes within Dell Med. Dr. Pignone's research is focused on improving implementation and equity in chronic disease prevention and treatment. His main areas of interest include heart disease prevention and cancer screening, particularly colorectal cancer screening. He brings specific expertise in the development and use of decision modeling and cost-effectiveness analyses to assess and improve preventive care. Dr. Pignone is a member of the Society of General Internal Medicine, the Association of Professors of Medicine, and is a

Master of the American College of Physicians. He has also served on multiple national guideline, advisory, and quality improvement panels, including for the American Diabetes Association, American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, PCORI, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



Elizabeth Rojo is a PhD candidate in the Department of Population Health Sciences at Duke University School of Medicine. Ms. Rojo's research interest lies at the intersection of climate change and health inequities. She is currently researching heat-health implications in the farmworker community in the US. She also co-leads the Climate X PopHealth Working Group within DPHS and serves in the scientific planning committee in the Environment Section within the American Public Health Association. She has worked domestically and internationally co-developing and growing projects in places like Mexico, Tanzania, Ghana, and the US. She has spent the last 10+ years

working in areas of HIV, Emergency Medicine, Global Health Education, Minority Aging, and Pandemic Workforce Development trainings on topics like cultural humility for researchers, vaccine communications, community engagement, and anti-colonial research practices. She has an educational background in International Relations (MSc) from Spain's IE School of Politics, Economics & Global Affairs. Outside of the academia, Ms. Rojo enjoys spending time in nature with her 4-year-old, sharing her children's book "La casa de Vicky" at community events or dancing to Latin beats.



Robert Tighe is Associate Professor of Medicine, Associate Professor of Environmental Science and Policy and Vice Chief for Research in the Division of Pulmonary, Allergy and Critical Care at Duke University. In March 2024, with the support of Dean Mary Klotman, Dr. Tighe initiated a research strategic planning effort in the Duke School of Medicine focused on the impacts of climate change on health. In 2025, he assumed the role of Director of the Duke School of Medicine Climate and Health Research Initiative (CHeRI). Dr. Tighe is a physician scientist. His research focuses pulmonary basic-translational studies defining mechanisms of susceptibility to environmental lung injury

and disease. His three principal research focus areas include: 1) Defining susceptibility factors and candidate pathways to host biological responses to environmental pollutants such as ozone, woodsmoke and silica, 2) Defining protective and detrimental functions of lung macrophage subsets, their cross talk with the lung epithelium, and how they regulate lung injury and repair, and 3) Determining the prognostic and theragnostic efficacy of 3D lung gas exchange imaging in pulmonary fibrosis using hyperpolarized $^{129}\text{Xenon}$ MRI.



Rebecca Whitaker is a Research Director with the Duke-Margolis Institute for Health Policy. Her work focuses on state and regional health care transformation with a particular emphasis on North Carolina's health reform activities. In this role, Dr. Whitaker helps lead the Institute's research and policy analysis related to care delivery and payment reform. Dr. Whitaker brings extensive experience in health services research, policy analysis, and program and policy implementation focused on Medicaid, social drivers of health, safety-net delivery systems, and underserved populations. Prior to joining Duke-Margolis, Dr. Whitaker served as Director of Health Policy &

Governmental Affairs at the North Carolina Community Health Center Association, where she led the Association's state and federal policy agenda and guided North Carolina health centers through large-scale payment and care delivery reforms, including Affordable Care Act implementation. During this time, she was also a Jim Bernstein Community Health Leadership Fellow through North Carolina's Foundation for Health Leadership and Innovation.