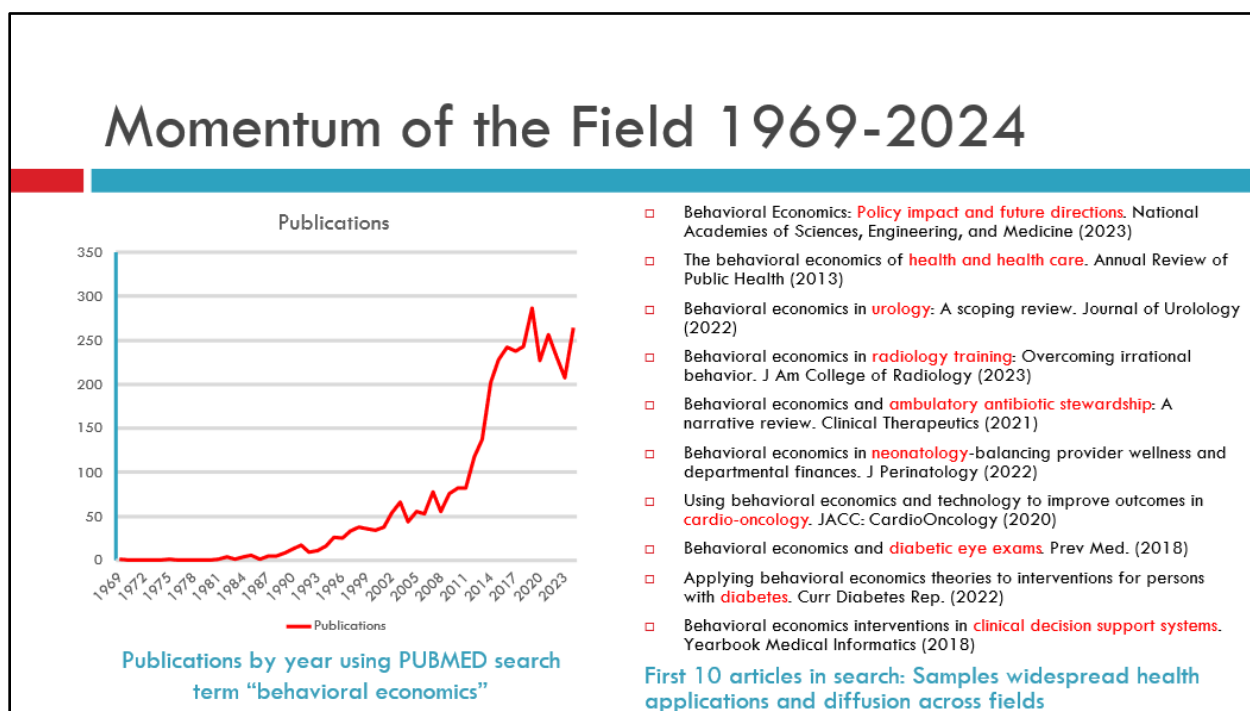


## Center for Behavioral Economic Research Status Report 2025

### OVERVIEW:

The Center for Behavioral Economic Health Research (CBEHR) was officially established in 2016 by renaming and refocusing a previously existing center in the College of Health and Human Performance called the Center for Digital Health and Wellness (CDHW). The CDHW was previously re-established from the original Florida Center for Health Promotion (FCHP), which was formally established as a Type IV center in 1994. CBEHR is administratively housed in the Department of Health Education and Behavior in the College of Health and Human Performance.

CBEHR seeks to stimulate research, funding applications, education, and outreach aimed at understanding and promoting beneficial human health behavior change. CBEHR initiatives are guided by the unifying trans-discipline of behavioral economics, which offers powerful concepts and methods for an enhanced understanding of the science of human behavior change and for guiding individual, community, economic, and policy level interventions that are accessible, cost-effective, and evidence-based. Behavioral economics has a fifty year history of development spanning the translational research continuum. The field has grown rapidly in the past several decades including health-relevant applications as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Publications by year using PUBMED search term "behavioral economics" with sample health-related publications showing rapid growth of transdisciplinary adoption of the perspective.

CBEHR provides an intellectual home at UF for scholars, practitioners, community partners, and policy-makers from multiple disciplines to promote behavioral economic research that contributes to individual and community health broadly envisioned. It provides distinctive theoretical perspectives and research foci not available elsewhere on the UF campus, while sharing complementary interests and collaborations with other UF centers, including the Center for Addiction Research and Education, Multidisciplinary Academic-Community Obesity Disparities Research, and the Southern HIV/AIDS and Alcohol Research Consortium. Membership is open to faculty, students, and community members, and members represent multiple University departments including Health Education and Behavior, Health Outcomes and Bioinformatics, Economics, Food and Resource Economics, Psychiatry, Psychology, and Sport Management, among others.

## ACTIVITIES

Beginning in 2017, CBEHR has offered monthly seminars during the academic year, either in-person or via Zoom. Seminars are open to the university and broader community and feature national, international, and local expert speakers and workshops on topics of interest within the scope of the CBEHR mission. Each year one seminar is presented by a promising early career investigator, and another entails the annual CBEHR Science Exchange during which students and early career investigators give short research presentations. Seminars are well attended (typically 30-40 participants) by faculty, students, and professionals both internal and external to UF. The website archive lists the seminars held during 2017-2025 and illustrates the scope of content in the field of behavioral economics and health as represented in the CBEHR, encompassing the basic to applied research continuum. See <https://hhp.ufl.edu/research-faculty/centers-institutes/center-for-behavioral-economic-health-research/cbehr-seminars/>

Planning is underway to expand educational opportunities by offering graduate courses on behavioral economics and health with the Department of Health Education and Behavior serving as the academic administrative unit. Also, during the academic year, the CBEHR widely distributes a monthly newsletter that summarizes recent CBEHR seminars, announces upcoming seminars and other events of membership interest (e.g., conferences), and highlights member awards and accomplishments, including recent member publications. A graduate student newsletter editor leads its preparation in collaboration with the CBEHR leadership, which provides a unique student learning opportunity.

The newsletter provides information on CBEHR pilot research and travel awards for early career and student investigators based on merit as determined by the **CBEHR Education and Training Committee**. The awards program was initiated in 2022. Travel awards of up to \$500 each support graduate student and postdoctoral CBEHR members to present their research on topics related to behavioral economics and health at national, international, and regional scientific and professional meetings. Applicants can receive one travel award per academic year. Pilot research awards of up to \$2,000 each support research conducted by post-doctoral associate and graduate student CBEHR members that aims to understand and promote human health behavior change

within the broad scope of basic and applied behavioral economics (e.g., economic, psychological, cognitive, community, policy, and/or social factors that influence individual, institutional, or health policy decision making). Applicants may receive one research award per academic year based on submission of a research proposal, budget, and justification.

The CBEHR and individual CBEHR-affiliated investigators offer extensive postdoctoral, graduate, and undergraduate research training opportunities, and trainees benefit from the travel and pilot research awards program and seminar series. Funds for travel and pilot research awards are provided by CBEHR indirect cost returns (IDC). See the PDF link to *CBEHR Travel and Pilot Research Award Recipients* on the Resources CBEHR website link for a list funded travel and research awards through Summer 2025.

## LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

The leadership team comprises tenured and tenure-track faculty members in the Department of Health Education and Behavior. Overall leadership is provided by founding CBEHR Director Jalie A. Tucker, PhD, MPH, Mary F. Lane Endowed Professor. As CBEHR activities have expanded, additional roles have been established to handle specific activities and now include Scientific Co-Director Meredith S. Berry, PhD, Associate Professor, who organizes and coordinates the seminar series; Education and Training Committee Chair Nichole M. Scaglione, PhD, CHES, Assistant Professor, who oversees the committee selection of merit-based research and travel awards to early career and student investigators and coordinates occasional workshops on special topics; and Methodology Core Director JeeWon Cheong, PhD, Associate Professor, who is developing a data set archive and review process to offer secondary data analysis opportunities to qualified faculty and student investigators. Except for Director Tucker's .25 effort during the 9-month academic year designated to oversee the CBEHR, no other roles involve state funding.

In 2025, the **CBEHR Advisory Board** was constituted to formalize input and oversight from nationally and internationally recognized experts who we frequently consulted informally in the past. The Advisory Board Members include Drs. James M. Murphy, Justin C. Strickland, Rudy E. Vuchinich, and Katie Witkiewitz. Their biographies are shown on the Leadership page of the CBEHR website at <https://hhp.ufl.edu/research-faculty/centers-institutes/center-for-behavioral-economic-health-research/cbehr-leadership-staff/>.

## FUNDING MODEL, REVENUE SOURCES, AND RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Funding for CBEHR activities primarily comes from indirect cost returns (IDC) that are generated by extramural research awards. The University of Florida distributes IDC to units involved in the extramural awards that generated the IDC, including a 10% IDC return to Principal Investigators. PIs may designate University-wide centers to receive an additional IDC return up to 7.5% with no impact on their 10% return. Departments may elect to invest their separate IDC returns in faculty, trainees, and activities that

advance the research enterprise. The CBEHR allocates these funds into its scholarly and educational activities.

CBEHR-affiliated faculty members have been highly successful in obtaining extramural research funding, primarily from agencies within the National Institutes of Health, and a growing number of graduate student and postdoctoral associates working with CBEHR faculty members have successfully competed for extramural research and research training awards. Many CBEHR-affiliated investigators have designated a portion of the IDC returns to the CBEHR, and there has been a 6-fold increase in annual IDC returns from FY19 (\$7,180) to FY25 (\$43,011) for a cumulative total of \$156,615.80.

Collectively across the individual grants and their anticipated award amounts over the lifetime of the grant project period, **the anticipated total costs from 43 extramural awards to 15 CBEHR investigators who contributed IDC were \$22,577,493.** This is a remarkable return on investment benefiting the University as a whole. Some grant awards involve CBEHR as a participating Center in successful interdisciplinary proposals submitted outside the College of Health and Human Performance, most notably the Southern HIV/AIDS and Alcohol Research Consortium NIAAA T32 pre- and post-doctoral research training award. In addition to IDC resulting from extramural research funding, annual donations have been made to the Center through the University of Florida Foundation (\$11,839 total FY19-FY25). Further, since 2023, Director Tucker holds the Mary F. Lane Endowed Professorship generously funded by UF Alumni Mary and Chip Lane through the University of Florida Foundation (\$132,454 through 6/30/25).

## PROGRESS IN RELATION TO GOALS

The CBEHR has been highly successful in meeting its original goal of increasing research funding, education, and training by attracting and involving accomplished and promising investigators and trainees in its collective mission. The CBEHR has also met its original goal of disseminating research in highly regarded peer-reviewed journals **From 2019 to April 2025, CBEHR members published 450 articles, book chapters, and books.** See the PDF link to *CBEHR Member Publications 2019 – 2025* on the Resources CBEHR website link.

The CBEHR is rapidly gaining visibility and recognition on campus, nationally, and internationally and is poised to become a preeminent leader in the application of behavioral economic principles to understand and promote human health. It is a distinctive UF entity with a unique mission, and it has demonstrated strong potential for further growth in pursuing its research, educational, and dissemination objectives.