



Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity Moves to UConn

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EAST HARTFORD, Conn. – Connecticut’s flagship public university today announced a new partnership with the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity, a nationally recognized nonprofit research center dedicated to informing policy decisions surrounding obesity prevention.

Officials from the University of Connecticut and the Rudd Center discussed the center’s new affiliation with UConn during a ceremony at Goodwin Elementary School in East Hartford that emphasized the importance of research in preventing obesity and improving the health of young people.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one in three children in the United States are obese or overweight, causing both immediate and long-term effects on their health and well-being.

“The Rudd Center has developed an outstanding national and international reputation for sound science and strategic policy advocacy,” said Mun Choi, provost and executive vice president for academic affairs at the University of Connecticut. “We are thrilled to have the Rudd Center join UConn as we build a growing record of excellence at our institution.”

Previously located at Yale University, the center and its faculty will move to UConn in January 2015. It is one of the first major initiatives of UConn’s Academic Vision, which prioritizes health and wellness research as an integral part of the University’s mission.

Recently ranked as one of the nation’s most effective nonprofits working on nutrition policy, the Rudd Center is a leader in conducting cutting edge research to inform pressing public policy issues; its work is widely used by policy makers and health advocates.

The Rudd Center is currently anchored by four core faculty members, all national experts in their fields: Marlene Schwartz, Rudd Center director; Rebecca Puhl, deputy director; Jennifer Harris, director of food marketing initiatives; and Tatiana Andreyeva, director of economic initiatives.

“We are excited to join UConn and the community of world-class researchers whose work is relevant to childhood obesity and weight stigma,” said Schwartz. “By joining UConn during this monumental time of growth, the Rudd Center will remain a leader in addressing how home environments, school landscapes, neighborhoods, and the media shape the eating attitudes and behaviors of children.”

The move will allow those researchers to expand their work and build new collaborations with UConn experts on nutrition, public policy, psychology, agriculture, economics, and obesity – many located within the University’s [Center for Health, Intervention and Prevention](#) (CHIP), where the Rudd Center will be situated. CHIP, which is led by Jeffrey Fisher, Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor of Psychology, has received more than \$100 million in external funding to support its health-related research, and has a proven track record of fostering interdisciplinary collaborations between many of these research areas. Its Obesity Research Group boasts 130 members from more than 20 UConn departments and multiple campuses.

Importantly, the Rudd Center’s relocation to Hartford’s Constitution Plaza, near UConn’s Graduate Business Learning Center, positions their resources near Connecticut policymakers. Rudd Center researchers have participated in meetings with the White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity, provided expert testimony in state and senate legislative hearings on proposed laws, and their research has provided essential support for federal, state, and local governments and NGOs in establishing evidence-based public health policy. Their research grants hail from government agencies and private foundations, including the Rudd Foundation, National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, American Heart Association, and Horizon Foundation.

The alignment between UConn and Rudd provides a new platform for researchers to elevate their work on obesity, investigating such varied questions as: economic incentives and the role of marketing in food choices; genetic and neurophysiological moderators of risk for obesity; chemosensory perception in humans and how it influences food preference and intake; worksite health promotion programs; weight management interventions for adults and children; faith-based interventions; identifying food deserts and measuring health outcomes in those areas; effects of cholesterol-lowering medications on muscle performance; obesity prevention policies; and weight-based stigma and bullying.

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