ALBANY, N.Y. (October 14, 2016) — The extent of the University’s desire to end minority health disparities is evidenced by the fact that its first five Presidential Doctoral Fellows for Research Training in that field represent four different UAlbany schools and colleges. The five students — Yajaira Cabrera-Tineo from Counseling Psychology (Education), Melissa Noel from Criminal Justice, Kaydian Reid from Health Policy, Management & Behavior and Wayne Lawrence from Epidemiology & Biostatistics (both Public Health), and Erica Tyler from Anthropology (Arts and Sciences) — have very different fields of study and career goals. But their constant is a shared commitment to eliminate disparities among minority populations. The five UAlbany-supported fellows, who themselves are from minority/underrepresented groups, will be joined by others students through the $10 million National Institutes of Health endowment grant awarded the University and its Center for the Elimination of Minority Health Disparities (CEMHD) in April of this year.

That landmark project positions UAlbany as the leading Northeast hub for health disparities education and research, and engages six of our nine schools and colleges along with nearly two dozen Capital Region community organizations. "The Health Disparity Fellows play a crucial part in the expansion of health disparities research at the University," said Lawrence Schell, CEMHD director. "They are drawn from among the best students on the campus and are dedicated to applying the specialized skills and knowledge of their doctoral program to the very serious and national problem of health disparities." The students will receive training for research and scholarship using transdisciplinary approaches, take courses to obtain a Health
Disparities Certificate in semester-long experiential learning with different NGOs, departments of health and/or research groups, participate in professional societies related to health disparities, and be part of a local community health task force convened by CEMHD.

Cabrera is the only member of the first cohort new to UAlbany this semester, attracted by the quality of the counseling psychology program, and now also eager to take advantages of the fellowship’s many facets. “The extra support the fellowship provides will allow me not just to acquire greater insight into the current status of health disparities but also to work with and learn from the leading researchers in the field.” said Cabrera. “I believe this will inform all aspects of my work.” Noel received her master’s in criminal justice at UAlbany and is now in her third year of Ph.D. study. “At the time of enrolling at UAlbany I was not aware of my research interest in health disparities,” she said. “Now, both the CEMHD and the endowment grant will play an essential role in my remaining time here in examining the collateral consequences of incarceration on the quality of life for formerly incarcerated parents and their children. “The fellowship will grant me the ability to conduct additional research on this population, engage in an interdisciplinary framework between criminal justice and public health, and develop meaningful relationships with mentors, professionals, and community partners.” Reid, Lawrence and Tyler were all attracted to UAlbany because of CEMHD and see particular benefits from the fellowships to their major concentrations of study.

Reid’s, for instance, is adolescent behavioral health, specifically on U.S. Caribbean black adolescents. She said the transdisciplinary experiential learning and research mentorship the fellowship offers will provide a strong foundation in scientific knowledge and research skills, “and the community health task force will expand my professional network both locally and nationally.” Lawrence, with a long research interest minority health and health disparities, said “the fellowship will not only further develop my research skills, but provide me the opportunity to collaborate with health departments and local community health taskforces to advocate for equitable health resources for the medically underserved population.” Anthropology Ph.D. Tyler’s concentration is in how stress impacts development and the interplay between socioeconomics and health. “I think this research fellowship fits very well within my chosen field,” she said. Presidential Doctoral Fellows for Research Training in Health Disparities must fulfill the academic requirements of their Ph.D. programs and complete graduate health disparities certificates.