

ANNUAL REPORT

2024



**CREATING
SPACES FOR
CONNECTION
AND CHANGE**

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



**AMY
MCGUIRE**

Leon Jaworski Professor of
Biomedical Ethics & Director

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

As we reflect on the past year, I am filled with gratitude and purpose. Our Center has made significant strides in pivotal areas such as public health, artificial intelligence (AI) and neuroethics, genomics, psychedelic medicine, medical education, and clinical ethics. These disciplines are not merely academic pursuits, they are the frontlines of our collective future.

2024 has been a year of unprecedented challenges and changes. We've seen climate change intensify, faced ethical dilemmas from advancing technologies, and navigated complex elections and sociopolitical issues. In these moments, it is crucial that we bear witness to what is happening around us. This means not turning away from discomfort but sitting with it, understanding it, and using it as a catalyst for change. Our clinical ethics consultants embody this approach, sitting with family members during times

of need to deeply understand patients' values and concerns. They navigate each unique situation with empathy and insight, ensuring compassionate and informed decision-making.

In a world that often feels divided, our Center is focused on creating spaces where we can come together, even in our differences. Through our research, we strive to uncover deeper truths about humanity, fostering connections and understanding. A crucial part of our mission involves teaching the next generation of medical professionals. By educating medical students at Baylor College of Medicine and EnMed, residents through our EP3 program, and physicians through our events and Grand Rounds, we instill the importance of sound reasoning, empathy, and interconnectedness in their practice. Our teaching emphasizes the value of understanding diverse perspectives and the necessity of creating spaces where dialogue and collaboration can flourish. Through our educational efforts, we aim to cultivate a community of healthcare professionals who are not only skilled in their fields but also deeply committed to the principles of unity and compassion. This approach ensures that our work continues to bridge gaps, foster understanding, and build a more connected and humane world.

As we move into 2025, let us carry forward this spirit of togetherness. Let us continue to create spaces where we can be with each other, support each other, and find solutions together. Our research is not just about data and insights; it's about people, communities, and the future we are building together.

Thank you for your dedication, your passion, and your unwavering commitment to our mission. Together, we can make a difference. I wish you all a peaceful holiday season and a bright, healthy 2025.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy McGuire". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Amy McGuire



CENTER OVERVIEW

VISION

To create a shared, sustainable intellectual environment where all stakeholders can critically reflect on and respond to ethical challenges in healthcare and biomedical research, welcoming diverse perspectives and fostering open dialogue among healthcare professionals, researchers, ethicists, and community members. By encouraging collaboration and mutual respect, we can address complex ethical dilemmas with empathy and understanding.

ABOUT US

- With about \$4 million of research funding annually and 20-30 active research grants, we are one of the largest funded bioethics research centers in the United States.
- Our 16 faculty are experts in bioethics, social sciences, biomedicine, health policy, the medical humanities, and law and are actively involved in teaching and scholarship. Nine faculty conduct grant-funded research and seven faculty provide clinical ethics consultations to Houston Methodist Hospital and Baylor St. Luke's Medical Center. Research and scholarship informs our teaching, clinical practice and contributions to the development of health and science policy.
- Center faculty collaborate with large networks of investigators and clinicians within Baylor, the Texas Medical Center and beyond, especially our Joint and Affiliated Faculty, Scholars and Emeritus and Adjunct Faculty.
- We respond quickly to emerging controversial issues and conduct cutting-edge research that is immediately needed to inform policy.

2024 HIGHLIGHTS: A SNAPSHOT

Increasing Complexity and Impact of Clinical Ethics

Our clinical ethics consultation services at [Houston Methodist Hospital](#) and [Baylor St. Luke's Medical Center](#) are expanding, handling more complex cases and developing metrics to share insights. We're also shaping policy and educating physicians about issues like how to make decisions for unrepresented patients and what it means for a treatment to be medically futile. At both hospitals, our ethics consultation services are available to patients, loved ones and healthcare professionals — at no charge — to help address ethical questions that arise in the delivery of healthcare. Ethics consultations can help provide guidance in areas of uncertainty, particularly ethical dilemmas, care disagreements, or interpreting advance care planning documents. Consults are also vital for identifying surrogate decision makers, helping patients and care teams think through end-of-life decisions, and analyzing complex organ transplantation and genetic medicine. Ethics consultants are members of the hospital's ethics committee and have special training in the practice of clinical ethics consultations.

- [HMH Consult:](#) (713) 404-7388; Note: services are available for other Houston Methodist locations
- [BSLMC Consult:](#) (832) 438-6665

New Grants and Opportunities, Growing our Research Portfolio



• Community and Public Health

- **EMPOWER Study: Engaging Community Members to Plan for Dissemination Of Wastewater Epidemiology Results:** Gathering key data from stakeholders and engaging diverse community members to develop strategies for disseminating results from a statewide wastewater, monitoring and research program in Texas. (*National Institute of Environmental Health Science, Office of the Director, National Human Genome Research Institute*)
- **MAGNET: Making Genomics Accessible for Newborns in Texas:** Improving diagnosis for the sickest newborns in Texas using new clinical assays and telehealth. (*National Human Genome Research Institute*)



• Clinical and Translational Science

- **Consortium for Translational and Precision Health:** Creating a regional hub for advancing clinical translational science. (*National Center for Advancing Translational Research*)
- **Building Mood State Classifiers to Inform Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) of Treatment-Resistant Bipolar Depression:** Advancing therapy for treatment-resistant bipolar depression with deep brain stimulation and smartphone-based monitoring. (*National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke*)
- **Mission to enhance EThics Education, Outreach, and Research in Space (METEORS):** A scholarly collaboration between our Center and the Translational Institute for Space Health (TRISH) at Baylor (*NASA/TRISH's Space Health Expeditionary Research Projects Assets (SHERPA) program*)



• Psychedelics

- **TRIPS Study: "Trustworthy, Responsible Integration of Psychedelics in Society":** Analyzing unregulated psychedelic retreats in the U.S. and their ethical, legal, and social implications. (*Ortus Foundation*)
- **Promoting High-Quality Ethics Review and Oversight of Psychedelic Research: Learning from Investigator Experience and IRB Perspectives: Developing empirically informed resources for both IRBs and investigators** (*The Greenwall Foundation*)



• Education and Training

- **AI in Healthcare:** Collaborating with Rice University's Baker Institute to enhance AI teaching, research, and outreach in health. (*TMC Collaborator Fund*)
- **Neuroscience and Society Internship:** Preparing future researchers to address ethical implications in neuroscience. (*Dana Foundation*)
- **AI Safety Consortium:** Participating in the U.S. AI Safety Institute Consortium to develop safe and trustworthy AI. (*Chamber of Commerce*)

A DEEPER DIVE: ACHIEVEMENTS, MILESTONES, AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

Innovative Research Opportunities

We are continuing to actively pursue new funding opportunities with three key focus areas:

- **Center of Excellence in Psychedelic Ethical, Legal, and Social Implications (ELSI) Research:** The U.S. Food and Drug Administration's rejection of Lykos Therapeutic's new drug application for MDMA-assisted therapy underscores the need for investment in psychedelic ethics. To address this, we seek support for the world's first Center of Excellence in Psychedelic ELSI Research, building on the existing **Ethical Legal Implications of pSychedelics in Society (ELIPSIS) Program** at Baylor College of Medicine. The Center will conduct research on harm reduction and ethical integration of psychedelic therapies, expand access to Indigenous knowledge and explore psychedelic use in the U.S. It also will train new researchers, engage stakeholders for policy development and create ethics guidelines for the psychedelic community.
- **Program at the Intersection of Health and Policy:** Medicine and health have been active areas of federal and state policymaking in recent years, especially as more applications of health data are discovered and put into practice. This program is focused on building an evidence base to understand public and expert perspectives on these applications to inform sound policies. Topics we are investigating include law enforcement uses of personal genetic data in criminal investigations and secondary research, commercial, public health, and public safety uses of data generated in scientific research and collected by wastewater surveillance programs. Our activities leverage the Center's deep expertise in empirical and analytical methods, including qualitative, quantitative, expert elicitation, legal analysis, and ethical analysis methods, as well as the faculty's involvement in relevant national and state policy committees and working groups.
- **Center for Humanities-Based Health AI Innovation:** AI-enabled healthcare systems are challenging the balance of art and science in medicine. To address this, we propose creating the Center for Humanities-based Health AI Innovation. This Center will advance medical humanities scholarship on trustworthy health AI, provide long-term support for interventions, and elevate public voices in AI design. It will study trust in health AI through anthropology, philosophy and ethics, ensuring community values are embedded in AI technologies.

Do you want to advance these exciting research areas? You can support our pioneering research by funding interns, postdocs, publications, and so much more, please click [here](#) or call (713) 798-4714.



NEW FACULTY, SCHOLARS AND PROMOTIONS



Melanie Jeske, Ph.D., earned her doctorate in Sociology with distinction from the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) and holds a Master of Science in Science, Technology, and Society from Drexel University. Her research delves into the social, political, and ethical aspects of biomedical knowledge systems, emerging biotechnologies, and the experiences of living with chronic illness.



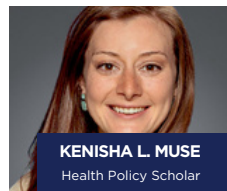
Alice Elizabeth Kelley completed her Ph.D. in Philosophy at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Her research in philosophy focuses on ethics, the philosophy of medicine and psychiatry, moral psychology, and the philosophy of emotion. In bioethics and clinical ethics, She is interested in how clinicians' language choices influence stigma transmission, particularly in electronic health records (EHRs), and how stigmatizing language impacts patient care and self-perception.



* **Andrew James Widmer, M.D.**
Location: Baylor Scott & White Center for Diagnostic Medicine in Temple, Texas
Specialty: Internal Medicine



* **John D. "Jack" Myers, M.D., D.O.**
Location: Baylor Scott & White Hillcrest Bosque Clinic
Specialty: Family Medicine



* **Kenisha L. Muse, M.D.**
Location: Baylor Scott & White Center for Diagnostic Medicine (Temple and Hillcrest locations)
Specialty: Anesthesiology



* **David Mathai, M.D.**
Location: Sattva Medicine in Miami
Specialties: Integrative Psychiatry and Psychedelic Therapy



* **Leon Budrie, M.D.**
Location: Houston Methodist Hospital
Specialty: Clinical Ethics

Introducing 'Joint Faculty':
Dedicated collaborators, committed to deeper engagement

Mary Brandt, M.D., M.Div.

John Coverdale, M.D.

Dcn. David Garvis, M.A., B.C.C., Ph.D.

Anne C. Gill, Dr.PH. M.S., R.N

Savitri Fedson, M.D., Ph.D.

Joseph Kass, M.D., J.D.

Michelle Lopez, M.D., M.P.H

Charles Millikan, D.Min.

Frank Placencia, M.D.

Susan Raine, M.D., J.D., LLM

Kim Sawyer, M.D., M.A., HEC-C

Peter Ubel, M.D.

PROMOTIONS



DEEPENING OUR COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION



LEADING THE WAY IN PROVIDING ETHICS CONTENT TO A BROAD AUDIENCE

The Medical Ethics and Health Policy Pathway programs at Baylor College of Medicine achieved significant milestones this year. They are among the largest pathway programs at the college and have successfully integrated with the Temple branch campus, fostering stronger relationships with students and increasing elective enrollments. This strategy has enhanced student engagement and structured the pathway experience, reinforcing the program's commitment to comprehensive ethics education and student involvement.

The Health Policy Pathway updated its curriculum, adding a four-hour policy session to the 415 elective course. This session allowed students to engage with real-world policy and legislative matters, featuring speakers like Hon. Rick Perry, former U.S. Secretary of Energy and governor, State Rep Dr. Suleman Lalani, and Lauren Billman, Director of Government Affairs, Baylor Scott & White who helped students understand physician advocacy and its impact on clinical practice.

180

students enrolled in our Pathway programs



30%

of all medical students are enrolled in our Pathway programs



NEW ETHICS THREAD

The Ethics Thread (ET) at Baylor integrates essential medical ethics topics into undergraduate medical education curriculum. Launched in the 2023-2024 academic year, it seamlessly blends with other educational topics, reflecting the integrated nature of medical practice.

ENMED PROGRAM

The EnMed Program, a collaboration with Houston Methodist Hospital and Texas A&M University, continues to grow. It includes humanities, ethics, altruism and leadership sessions in its Practice of Medicine courses, covering topics like surrogate decision making, informed consent, and diversity. Students can choose from six to eight small group seminars to apply analytical skills to ethical issues. This year, new educational techniques have enhanced cross-talk and knowledge sharing.

DEEPENING OUR COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION

ETHICS, PROFESSIONALISM AND POLICY PROGRAM (EP3)

The EP3 program continues to make significant progress in reaching all residency programs at Baylor. This year's focus includes adding new content and creating an open-access platform for broader reach.

- * [Clinician Advocacy](#)
- * [Firearm Safety](#)
- * [Professionalism \(updated\)](#)
- * [Social Determinants of Health \(updated\)](#)

CME

We create free, cutting-edge CME content on emerging topics that clinicians need, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration for holistic and ethical patient care. Our Bioethics Grand Rounds offers six sessions yearly, and we launched our first Health Policy Grand Rounds in October. We aim to enhance the packaging and marketing of our ethics CME content, including EP3 modules and Grand Rounds, to improve access. Our 2024 offerings included:

- * [This is a Hospital, not a Jail: Caring for Patients Experiencing Incarceration](#)
- * [When Accuracy Becomes Passé: AI Ethics for the Coming Era of Exceptional AI](#)
- * [Clinical Ethics in the Global South: Current Status and Future Prospects](#)
- * [Lost in Translation? Opportunities & Challenges in Providing Interpretation for Patients.”](#)
- * [Queer Eye for the Clinician and PI: Ethically Caring for LGBTQIA+ Individuals](#)
- * [Deciding Alone: Unilateral Withdrawal of Life-Sustaining Interventions](#)
- * [Sick To Debt: Why Out of Pocket Costs Are So High and What We Can Do About It](#)

FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

Our [clinical ethics fellowship program](#) stands out as a leading program nationwide. Our faculty participate in a national effort to create accreditation for fellowship programs. We also have a research fellowship program who are funded by specific PIs. We are actively recruiting for [two postdoc positions](#).



INSPIRING THE LEADERS OF TOMORROW

Our [summer internship program](#) in clinical ethics and bioethics research nurtures future leaders in ethics education. We will begin recruitment efforts in January for 2025 summer interns. This year, we selected 14 outstanding interns from more than 200 applicants, showcasing the high level of interest and talent. We hosted 10+ students from Georgetown Day School, where students engaged with leading educators and learned about research and opportunities to enhance their academic and professional growth.

IMPACTFUL COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES



We hosted a screening of the award-winning documentary **"A Still Small Voice"** in collaboration with key partners across the Texas Medical Center, followed by a panel discussion with spiritual care and ethics leaders.



The esteemed **Baruch A. Brody Award** for 2023-2024 was awarded to **Daniel M. Hausman, Ph.D.**, in recognition of his lecture discussing the influence of personal preferences on healthcare choices.



This year we hosted our annual **Bioethics Intensive Course** in-person with 20 lively participants who came from various cities, including Houston, Atlanta, Salt Lake City, Louisville, Albuquerque, Baytown, Columbia, Honolulu, Philadelphia and more.



Our **Health Policy Symposium**, co-hosted with the Center for Professionalism, brought together over 200 participants to explore the theme "When Medicine Becomes Political" featuring Baylor faculty and keynotes from Drs. Bret Giroir, Peter Hotez and Robert Blendon.

This year, we continued to organize events that foster connections and encourage the exchange of ideas.

- **Developing Issues in Bioethics and Society (DIBS) Seminar:**
 - Miranda Waggoner, Ph.D., David Cohen, Ph.D., John F. P. Bridges, Ph.D., Jalayne J. Arias, Ph.D., Victoria Helmly, Nia Johnson, J.D., Matthew Motta, Ph.D.
- **Breakfast with Bioethicists:**
 - Patrick T. Smith, Ph.D., Jeremy A. Greene, M.D., Ph.D., and Hadley Stevens-Smith, Ph.D.
- **Clinical Case Conference:** A quarterly meeting to review challenging ethical cases in collaboration with our colleagues at Weil Cornell, discussing conflicts, roles, responsibilities, solutions, and research opportunities.
- **Works in Progress:** A platform for Center presenters to receive feedback in a casual environment, helping to advance projects at any stage of development. This can include research proposals, survey instruments, interview guides, drafts of papers and grant applications.
- **Methods Support Group:** An informal gathering focused on discussing quantitative and qualitative methods, study design, analytic approaches and data interpretation. Included guest presentations from Peter Ubel, M.D. and Laura Sheard, Ph.D.
- **Relaunching Health Equity Grand Rounds:** We coordinated with LeChauncy Woodard, M.D., M.P.H, associate dean for Community Engagement and Health Equity, to relaunch Equity Grand Rounds in November 2024 featuring health policy scholar Cedric Dark, M.D., M.P.H.
- **Launched SPAARK Speaker Series;** this is a series tailored for those in the Texas Medical Center who want to dive deeper into the transformative role of AI in healthcare and research.

SAVE THE DATE: UPCOMING EVENTS



1/22, 2/19, 4/16

BIOETHICS GRAND ROUNDS



1/30/25

HEALTH POLICY GRAND ROUNDS



2/3/25

BARUCH A. BRODY LECTURE



4/7-4/11

BIOETHICS INTENSIVE COURSE



4/24/25

HEALTH POLICY SYMPOSIUM

SNEAK PEEK OF EXCITING EVENTS IN 2025.

- Join us for our **Bioethics Grand Rounds**, designed to keep healthcare professionals informed about the latest developments in bioethics and health policy. The sessions will take place on Jan. 22, Feb. 19, and April 16, with more scheduled throughout 2025.
- Dr. Zeke Emanuel will lead a **Health Policy Grand Rounds** Jan. 30th. in person in Kleberg Auditorium. Additionally, we will organize a session in early summer that will concentrate on a recap of the Texas Legislature.
- On Feb. 3, the **Baruch A. Brody Lecture** will explore "The Powerful and Perpetual Impact of Baruch Brody's Work on Today's Bioethics." This event will feature Larry McCullough, Ph.D., Susan Miller, M.D., M.P.H., and Samuel Reis-Dennis, Ph.D., with Amy McGuire, J.D., Ph.D., serving as moderator. Learn more and register [here](#).
- We are partnering with Houston Methodist to offer a five-day virtual **Bioethics Intensive Course** at the Texas Medical Center, beginning April 7. This interactive course covers vital bioethics topics and enhances advanced clinical ethics skills. Registration is now open - [learn more!](#)
- Scheduled for April 24, the **Health Policy Symposium** is our annual event that highlights health policy initiatives at Baylor and tackles current challenges.

To stay up-to-date on all of our upcoming Medical Ethics and Health Policy events, please **view our calendar [here](#)**.

PUBLICATION HIGHLIGHTS



In 2024, we amplified our ongoing focus on media and stakeholder engagement to enhance visibility, drive attention and inspire action on the issues that matter to us. We aim to build on this momentum in the coming year, further solidifying our presence and expanding our impact.



Published extensively with over **100 publications** in leading journals, including JAMA Network Open, American Journal of Bioethics, Genetics in Medicine, American Journal of Human Genetics, Nature Genetics, Journal of Genetic Counseling, Journal of Alzheimer's Disorders and more.



50+ media mentions in outlets such as The Atlantic, Salon, New York Times, Houston Chronicle, MIT Technology Review and Dallas Morning News.



Shared **35+ blog posts** on our Policywise blog, authored by Baylor faculty, staff and learners from across our community, garnering thousands of views.

Genetics in Medicine
The Official Journal of the ACMG

[Satisfaction With Mode of Delivery of Genomic Sequencing Results in a Diverse National Sample of Research Participants Through the Clinical Sequencing Evidence-Generating Research Consortium](#)

JME

[Integrating Constructivism in the Critical Dialogue Method of Clinical Ethics](#)

[The Promise of Xenotransplantation: A Challenge](#)

The American Journal of BIOETHICS

[Diversifying Bioethics: Taking Action, Making Progress, Sustaining Success](#)

[The Future of Bioethics: Striving for a More Diverse and Inclusive Bioethics](#)

The American Journal of BIOETHICS

[Ethical Complexities in Utilizing Artificial Intelligence for Surrogate Decision Making](#)

nature genetics

[Ethical Governance for Genomic Data Science in the Cloud](#)

[Large-Scale Genotype Prediction From RNA Sequence Data Necessitates a New Ethical and Policy Framework](#)

JN

[Developing an Ethics and Policy Framework for Psychedelic Clinical Care: A Consensus Statement](#)

[Public Attitudes, Interests, and Concerns Regarding Polygenic Embryo Screening](#)

AJOB Empirical Bioethics

[Public Perspectives on Investigative Genetic Genealogy: Findings from a National Focus Group Study](#)

[Anti-Racism in Clinical Ethics Fellowships: Rising to the Occasion](#)

FSI SYNERGY

[IGG in the Trenches: Results of an In-Depth Interview Study on the Practice, Politics, and Future of Investigative Genetic Genealogy](#)

PEC

[Patients' and Physicians' Beliefs and Attitudes Towards Integrating Personalized Risk Estimates Into Patient Education About Left Ventricular Assist Device Therapy](#)

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR HEART & LUNG TRANSPLANTATION

[Ethical Considerations in Xenotransplantation of Thoracic Organs – A Call for a Debate on Value Based Decisions](#)

THE HASTINGS CENTER REPORT

[A Risk Is Not a Harm: Abortion Exceptions in State Laws](#)

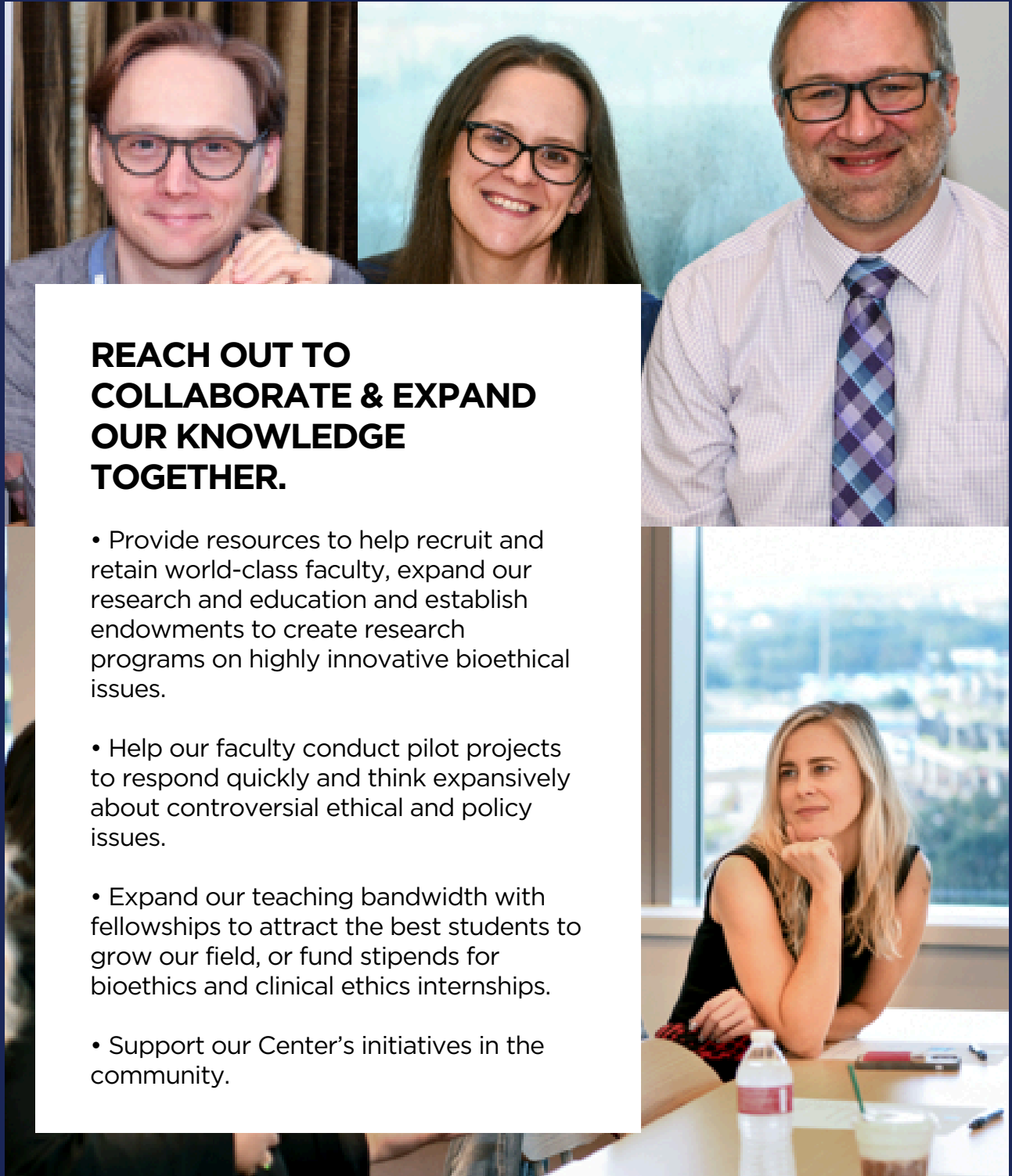
[Neither Ethical nor Prudent: Why Not to Choose Normothermic Regional Perfusion](#)

MONASH BIOETHICS REVIEW

[The Foundations of Informed Consent and Bodily Self-Sovereignty: A Positive Suggestion](#)

Thank you for reading this report and being a part of our community. Your generous support and collaboration enable us to research and influence policy on today's most pressing ethical issues. Your support tells us that you believe in our mission.

CONNECT WITH US



REACH OUT TO COLLABORATE & EXPAND OUR KNOWLEDGE TOGETHER.

- Provide resources to help recruit and retain world-class faculty, expand our research and education and establish endowments to create research programs on highly innovative bioethical issues.
- Help our faculty conduct pilot projects to respond quickly and think expansively about controversial ethical and policy issues.
- Expand our teaching bandwidth with fellowships to attract the best students to grow our field, or fund stipends for bioethics and clinical ethics internships.
- Support our Center's initiatives in the community.

Every gift is appreciated and will help us continue our work in 2025.
[Donate now](#) or please contact Office Advancement and Alumni Affairs at (713) 798-4714.