

MPH NEWS

William G. Faraclas, Dr.P.H., M.P.H., Chairperson

Michael J. Perlin, Ed.D., M.P.H., Graduate Coordinator

Coordinator's Message by Dr. Michael J. Perlin



This has been an exciting year and there is much to report. As you may be aware, the site visit for national re-accreditation of the M.P.H. program and the initial accreditation of the B.S. program was completed on December 3, 2008. Preparation for these accreditations began more than two years ago and ended with a very successful site visit. The Department's 377 page self-study, 337 pages of appendices and 48 bound documents, comprised of hundreds of pages of supportive documentation, and focus groups held with various constituent groups, provided evidence of a well-conceived and delivered undergraduate and graduate degree program.

Based on the findings of the site team, the Department has modified its program mission and renamed the current specialization in Community Health Education Health Promotion to more accurately reflect its intentions and activities. It also dropped the generalist track in the B.S. and M.P.H. program and the environmental health concentration in the B.S. program-Students in the B.S degree program will be

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Coordinator's Message Cont'd...

trained in both Environmental Health and Health Promotion thus ensuring the broadest possible background in Public Health. As you can see, the recommendations involved minimal modification of the existing programs and confirmed their exceptional high quality.

We are currently preparing for both graduation and the entering cohort of 2009. It's that special time of year when out goes the old and in comes the new, including faculty. And the cycle continues. Spring is a time of renewal. It's a time that projects the sense that one phase is about to end and another commence. Like spring, life is a series of transitions. For those who are working towards their degrees, there is the transition from one semester to another; those who are entering are assuming the role of graduate student, and those who are graduating, are leaving behind the status of student and donning the title of professional, transitioning from the collegial environment of the University to one of the most challenging and tumultuous times in our nation's history.

Like yourself, the world is itself in transition. The challenges to the public's health have never been greater. Re-emerging and emerging infections, malnutrition (under and over), and reproductive health problems are challenging health care systems around the world. Non-communicable, chronic diseases and injuries are poised to bankrupt the most prosperous nations. And finally, the associated health risks of globalization, including pandemics of SARS, AIDS and respiratory infections, the impact of climate change on human health, the proliferation of tobacco and other drugs, the world-wide epidemic of obesity, and the personal lifestyle practices of millions threaten the well-being of billions.

The fight for the public's health must be fought on multiple fronts. Success will take no less than the knowledge, skills, ideals, ideas, and commitment of public health professionals who are ready to sow the seeds of change. You are the future of public health. Your time is now. And finally, a short story that I have often quoted during our graduation dinner (but not this year).

The Chicken

Once upon a time, there was a large mountainside, where an eagle's nest rested. The eagle's nest contained four large eagle eggs. One day an earthquake rocked the mountain causing one of the eggs to roll down the mountain, to a chicken farm, located in the valley below. The chickens knew that they must protect and care for the eagle's egg, so an old hen volunteered to nature and raise the large egg. One day, the egg hatched and a beautiful eagle was born. Sadly, however, the eagle was raised to be a chicken. Soon, the eagle believed she was nothing more than a chicken. The eagle loved her home and family, but her spirit cried out for more. While playing a game, on the farm one day, the eagle looked to the skies above and noticed a group of mighty eagles soaring in the skies.

"Oh", the eagle cried, "I wish I could soar like those birds". The chickens roared with laughter, "You can not soar with those birds! you are a chicken and chickens do not soar". The eagle continued staring, at her natural family up above, dreaming that she could be with them. Each time, the eagle would let her dreams be known, she was told it couldn't be done and that is what the eagle learned to believe. The eagle, after time, stopped dreaming and continued to live her life like a chicken. Finally, after a long life as a chicken, the eagle passed away.

You become what you believe you are, So if you ever dream to become an eagle follow your dreams AND DON'T BE CHICKEN

BE COURAGEOUS. BE A DREAMER. CREATE A VISION. MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

To all the readers of the Coordinator's Corner for all these many years, it has been an honor to know you and I offer you my sincerest and heartfelt best wishes for a wonderful and rewarding career.

New Public Health Faculty



Stanley N. Bernard, MPH is a recent addition to the SCSU faculty in the Department of Public Health. As an Assistant professor, Professor Bernard teaches classes in public health policy and administration. He is currently finishing his Doctor of Public Health Degree as a Kellogg Health Disparities Research Fellow in sociomedical sciences at the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University in New York City. Professor Bernard received his Master of Public Health Degree from Yale University and his Bachelor of Arts degree from Columbia University in New York City.

His past work experiences include Director of the Partnership for Kids (PARK) Project in Bridgeport, CT. PARK Project was a six-year initiative funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to integrate systems of care into public schools in Bridgeport. He has also had an appointment as a Senior Policy Researcher and the Director of Administration and Human Resources at the National Center for Children in Poverty at the Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University.

Before going to Columbia, Professor Bernard was the Associate Director of Applied Research and Policy Studies at the Annie E. Casey Foundation funded Bridgeport Futures Initiative in Bridgeport, CT. He has several publications to his credit including two reports on state initiatives that encourage responsible fatherhood, co-authored with Dr. Jane Knitzer, author of *Unclaimed Children: The Failure of Public Responsibility to Children and Adolescents in Need of Mental Health Services*, the landmark report that started the children's mental health revolution in the 1980s. Through his work in communities and in academia, Professor Bernard has gained both academic and hands on knowledge of the plight of people in poverty. He is an expert in qualitative program evaluations and is a nationally recognized for his work on marriage, fatherhood and family formation. Professor Bernard is also a speaker and consultant on urban families and youth programs.

In addition to his academic writing, Professor Bernard has a volume of his poetry, ***Why does a black poet: Contemporary musings of an African descendant***, published by Kushite Multimedia Press in 2003. *Why Does a Black Poet* discusses race, ghetto life, love, spirituality, and African heritage. Each section of the book begins with a philosophical discourse on the topics listed. Each discourse is concluded with a reason why the topic should be a focus of a black poet. Within each section are poems from real life related to the topic at hand.

Professor Bernard was born in Kingston, Jamaica in the West Indies. He moved to the United States in 1970 at age five with his parents and eleven brothers and sisters. He grew up in Bridgeport, CT, where he lives today. He is currently married with four children.

New Public Health Faculty, Contd...



RICHARD CAIN, Ph.D., M.Ed.

Dr. Richard Cain, Associate Professor of Public Health, joined the faculty of Southern Connecticut State University in 2008. Most recently he was the Associate Director for Education and Development at the Community Provider Network of Rhode Island. Dr. Cain holds a Ph.D. in Health Education with an emphasis in community health and a B.S. in Health Planning and Administration from The Pennsylvania State University and a Masters of Education in Health Education from George Mason University.

Dr. Cain's primary research focuses on social inequalities and social problems and how these concepts lead to health disparities. He studies the effects of stigma on primary and secondary HIV-related prevention behaviors. As a rehabilitative effort for those living with HIV disease, he has studied quality of life as a function of empowerment among those living with HIV disease in a rural area of mainly African Americans. He has also researched ways to improve the quality of health and physical education programs and to provide earlier intervention in the fight against obesity and other preventable chronic diseases through increased physical activity and healthy eating behaviors among students.

At Southern, Dr. Cain teaches PCH 201 – Wellness, PCH 359 – Environmental Health, and PCH 515 – Biostatistics. He also provides leadership to the undergraduate program in environmental health.

Quotes of the Month

Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.

-Martin Luther King

Our talents are the gift that God gives to us...What we make of our talents is our gift back to God.

-Leo Buscaglia

It is not enough to fight. It is the spirit which we bring to the fight that decides the issue. It is morale that wins the victory.

-General George Marshall

Community Health Advocacy

M.P.H. students participated in a unique and informative event when a typical class evening was transformed into a conference designed for them. The Department of Public Health, in conjunction with the Universal Health Care Foundation, organized a conference entitled Community Health Advocacy & Working for Health Care Reform, during the evening class time on November 6th. The conference was funded by a mini-grant from the Connecticut Campus Compact for Service-Learning, Community Service and Civic Engagement.

The conference brought together two important issues in public health, the principles of advocacy and working to achieve health care access for everyone, with a focus on activities in Connecticut. The evening began with a welcome from the Dean of the School of Health and Human Services, Dr. Gregory Paveza who recalled his days as a community organizer. Ms. Frances Padilla, of the Universal Health Care Foundation, described the current landscape with *A “5,000 foot view” of health care reform in the United States and Connecticut.*

The remainder of the evening was devoted to a three part roundtable discussion on advocacy entitled *What it is and how to do it.* Dr. Ellen Andrews, an experienced lobbyist and the Executive Director of the Connecticut Health Policy Project, presented the elements of lobbying and tips for success. Paul Wessel, of the Universal Health Care Foundation, talked about the activities of health-care4every1 and encouraged the conference attendees (especially Southern students) to get involved in working for reform. Ann Pratt, the Director of Connecticut Parent Power, gave the final presentation, speaking about the importance of using our power, values and organizational ability to achieve positive changes in health care access. The evening ended with the attendees’ ideas about ways to get involved with advocacy. Every person who wanted to get involved was invited to sign up for healthcareevery1 membership and to attend a Public Action Event with New Haven public officials in Hamden on December 10th.

The conference was attended by well over 100 people, including Southern students and faculty and members of the community. Continuing education credits were offered for Certified Health Education Specialists. The conference was organized by Southern undergraduate and graduate students (Comfort Agaba, Bernard Agaba, Maurice Angme, Vanessa Burns, Courtney Martin, Nwanzu Ndika, Reena Patel, Jessica Ribeiro, and Patricia Tavalozzi) and public health faculty (Drs. Beatty, Breny Bontempi and Gallup).

By Dr. Peggy Gallup, Ph.D., M.P.H., R.N.



Experience of a Recipient of the Prestigious Minority Scholarship

The famous quote by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. “Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in healthcare is the most shocking and inhumane” is a statement that continued to move me forward when I felt like giving up as a minority scholar in Southern Connecticut State University’s MPH program. Balancing family, full-time employment, and full-time coursework was a challenge that I will never forget, but I have also reaped rewards I will never forget.

My thesis research was accepted for presentation at two national conferences, I was promoted to a highly respected management position within a state agency, and my participation has been requested at numerous community events that advance the health equity movement.

As a minority scholar I can truly say that I was provided with a top-notch education that has resulted in endless professional opportunities. Many faculty, particularly Dr. Unson, Dr. Faraclas, Dr. Breny Bontempi, Dr. Perlin, and Dr. Gallup, though supportive, maintained an expectation of excellence and continually challenged me to develop a greater vision for my career and my interest in eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities.

Some of the scholarship requirements were:

Maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA

Provide regular seminars on eliminating health disparities to students and faculty

Engage in disparity-related research for thesis

Complete internship with a focus on health disparities

Be employed full-time in a health or social service agency

The Minority Scholars program allowed me to immerse myself in the field and share ideas with renowned leaders in public health. These connections resulted in exciting mentoring relationships that I continue to cultivate and maintain as a professional. The recognition I have received as a scholar working on issues of health disparities has established me as a credible stakeholder in my community. It is very encouraging to know that my input matters and that I am requested to be at the table in these critical discussions about race, equity, and health.

By Stephanie Guess, MPH, CHES

Announcing the 2009 Graduate Minority Scholarship Program

The Connecticut Health Foundation and Southern Connecticut State University are offering scholarships for two students from underrepresented minority groups to complete a Master of Public Health degree. The purpose of the Graduate Minority Scholarship Program is to provide financial support to minority students in order to increase representation of minority professionals in public health and contribute to the elimination of health disparities in Connecticut.

The scholarships beginning Fall 2009 will cover the costs of tuition, fees, and other expenses up to \$8,300 annually. The application deadline was March 30, a good number of people applied for the scholarship this year and recipients will be notified after the selection process.

Additional information regarding the scholarship program can be obtained from Dr. Christine Unson, Program Director, at unsonc1@southernct.edu.

Alumni Corner

Patricia A. DeWitt, MPH, who graduated in May, 2008 with a specialization in Community Health, successfully earned the distinct title of Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES) during the Spring 2008 examination, which was announced in *The CHES Bulletin*, Winter 2009. She was also elected to the Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges in recognition of outstanding merit and accomplishment as a student at Southern Connecticut State University in 2008 which considered professional and community contributions. Ms. DeWitt was formerly named a member of this body at the University of New Haven in 1978.

Ms. DeWitt, Director, Ambulatory Services in Community Health at Yale-New Haven Hospital, was most recently selected as the 2009 award recipient of the Distinguished Woman Award by the Southern Connecticut Black Nurses Association for her academic and professional accomplishments, volunteer service and contributions to the community.

Ms. DeWitt supports the educational efforts of students at SCSU by providing internship and special project opportunities in the Department of Community Health at Yale New Haven Hospital.

Ms. DeWitt's advice for graduating students is to obtain Continuing Education Credits as they go out into the field. Continuing Education Credits (CEUs) can be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Public Health Training Network (PHTN) at no cost through distance learning programs to update and enhance professional competencies by use of webcasts, videos, satellite broadcasts, etc., throughout the year. These distance learning programs make it easily accessible to obtain the necessary CEUs for CHES recertification. The website address is: <http://www2a.cdc.gov/phtn/>

By Patricia DeWitt, MPH, CHES. Director, Ambulatory Services in Community Health, Yale-New Haven Hospital.

Alessandra Litro, MPH, CHES, works at the CT Department of Public Health in the Lead Poisoning Prevention and Control Program as a Health Educator. Skills Alessandra acquired from SCSU have contributed immensely to helping her carry out her duties effectively.

Springtime is a very busy time for the lead program as it is a time to go out to daycare centers talking about the dangers of lead poisoning. Aside from the lead program, she is the Education Chair for the CT Environmental Health Association, and is continuously trying to plan trainings for local health professionals in CT.

She was also able to work with SCSU this year to help coordinate the Environmental Health Training Program which gives sanitarians their Phase 1 Certification and she claims it was a pleasure working with Nwanzu Ndika on the course because she was very organized and fun to be around.

Alessandra still keeps in touch with people from her cohort and she tries to use the expertise from her cohort for the trainings that are conducted in the state.

-By Alessandra Litro, MPH, CHES. CT Lead Poisoning Prevention Program.

CONGRATULATIONS!!!



We are thrilled to congratulate our colleague **Melissa** on the delivery of her baby **Daniel**. **Carl and Melissa Cavrell** welcomed their third boy on February 6, 2009 at 7:26 pm. Baby Daniel was born weighing 8 pounds, 9 ounces and measuring 21 inches long.

Congratulations also go out to one of our alumni, **Patricia A. DeWitt** (Director, Ambulatory Services, Community Health Department, Yale-New Haven Hospital) who was recently selected as the 2009 award recipient of the Distinguished Woman Award by the Southern Connecticut Black Nurses Association for her academic and professional accomplishments, volunteer service and contributions in the community. She was recognized at a luncheon on April 26, 2009. Thank you Patricia for making us proud!!!

The Importance of University/Community Partnerships in Creating Relevant Service Learning Assignments

Through equal partnership with course faculty, MPH students of Southern Connecticut State University and staff of AIDS Project New Haven, carried out a project to highlight an example of students working with a community-based organization. Chris Cole, Executive Director of AIDS Project New Haven and Dr. Breny Bontempi partnered on the development of a project to complete an agency-wide assessment for strategic planning purposes. It was a pleasant experience for the Graduate Public Health Students who contributed to AIDS Projects' goal of creating and improving programs.

Prior to this project, certain barriers had prevented graduate students from carrying out service learning assignments; these barriers include work schedules, personal lives, and communicating distance which all result in a lack of time needed for students to work on-site at an agency. This project showed that by taking on a participatory approach to conducting assessments and assigning students to working in groups that met their own needs, these barriers were broken and the success of completing projects was increased.

This project was also of benefit to the students and the organization; it helped the organization do their work better and by collaborating with the organization and the community, students realized that even the most diverse populations can be united by common goals. Making a 'real difference' in the 'real world' is at once inspiring and empowering.

By **Dr Jean Breny Bontempi, PhD, MPH** and the students of **PCH 504-01**

CROSSWORD SEARCH

P	R	O	G	R	A	M	A	Q	W	R	T	W	E	L	L	N	E	S	S
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Can you find these words hidden in the puzzle? They are words from some of the courses in the Public Health Program.

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| 1. PROGRAM | 11. THESIS |
| 2. PLANNING | 12. SPECIAL |
| 3. BIostatISTICS | 13. PROJECT |
| 4. COMMUNITY | 14. INDEPENDENT |
| 5. WATER SUPPLY | 15. STUDY |
| 6. EMERGENCY | 16. WELLNESS |
| 7. WASTE | 17. EPIDEMIOLOGY |
| 8. LAW | 18. HEALTH |
| 9. INTERNSHIP | 19. BEHAVIOR |
| 10. POLICY | 20. NUTRITION |

-By Comfort Agaba

HEALTH CARE



On Tuesday, January 20, 2009, America and the whole world watched in admiration and explicable joy as the 44th president of America took the oath of office. Each new administration is confronted with unique challenges, found below is the new administration's agenda for health care.

“On health care reform, the American people are too often offered two extremes -- government-run health care with higher taxes or letting the insurance companies operate without rules. President Obama and Vice President Biden believe both of these extremes are wrong, and that's why they've proposed a plan that strengthens employer coverage, makes insurance companies accountable and ensures patient choice of doctor and care without government interference.

The Obama-Biden plan provides affordable, accessible health care for all Americans, builds on the existing health care system, and uses existing providers, doctors, and plans. Under the Obama-Biden plan, patients will be able to make health care decisions with their doctors, instead of being blocked by insurance company bureaucrats.

Under the plan, if you like your current health insurance, nothing changes, except your costs will go down by as much as \$2,500 per year. If you don't have health insurance, you will have a choice of new, affordable health insurance options.

The Obama-Biden plan will promote public health.

It will require coverage of preventive services, including cancer screenings, and increase state and local preparedness for terrorist attacks and natural disasters.

Reduce Costs and Save a Typical American Family up to \$2,500 as reforms phase in:

- Lower drug costs by allowing the importation of safe medicines from other developed countries, increasing the use of generic drugs in public programs, and taking on drug companies that block cheaper generic medicines from the market.
- Require hospitals to collect and report health care cost and quality data.
- Reduce the costs of catastrophic illnesses for employers and their employees.
- Reform the insurance market to increase competition by taking on anticompetitive activity that drives up prices without improving quality of care.

(contd...)

Health Care Contd...

Make Health Insurance Work for People and Businesses – Not Just Insurance and Drug Companies.

- Require insurance companies to cover pre-existing conditions so all Americans regardless of their health status or history can get comprehensive benefits at fair and stable premiums.
- Create a new Small Business Health Tax Credit to help small businesses provide affordable health insurance to their employees.
- Lower costs for businesses by covering a portion of the catastrophic health costs they pay in return for lower premiums for employees.
- Prevent insurers from overcharging doctors for their malpractice insurance and invest in proven strategies to reduce preventable medical errors.
- Make employer contributions more fair by requiring large employers that do not offer coverage or make a meaningful contribution to the cost of quality health coverage for their employees to contribute a percentage of payroll toward the costs of their employees' health care.
- Establish a National Health Insurance Exchange with a range of private insurance options as well as a new public plan based on benefits available to members of Congress that will allow individuals and small businesses to buy affordable health coverage.
- Ensure everyone who needs it will receive a tax credit for their premiums.

A Commitment to Fiscal Responsibility:

Barack Obama will pay for his \$50 - \$65 billion health care reform effort by rolling back the Bush tax cuts for Americans earning more than \$250,000 per year and retaining the estate tax at its 2009 level.”

Retrieved January 27, 2009 from http://www.whitehouse.gov/agenda/health_care/

Students Present Posters at the Connecticut Public Health Association Conference, November 14, 2008.

Eight current and former students of the MPH program presented posters at the CPHA conference held at Water's Edge in Westbrook on November 14, 2008. SCSU students posters comprised 6 of the 14 posters presented at the conference. The posters were based on their Master's Thesis project, their course work in Biostatistics (PCH 515) or International Field Studies in Health (PCH 570), and Graduate Research Fellowships.

Abha Shrestha presented findings of her thesis on how avian influenza is framed in a Philippine newspaper.

Deanna Martin presented two posters. Her first poster presented her Biostatistics project paper on risk factors for nonmedical use of prescription drugs. Her second poster, which was co-authored with **Haley McCarthy** and **Greta Roberts**, showcased photographs and reflections of their field trip to Guatemala.

Kim Doughty presented the findings of her research on the "Effects of Nutrition Information in a Restaurant Menu on Customers' Food Choices". The research was supported by a Graduate Research Fellowship.

Nwanzu Ndika and **Rashidat Olayokun's** poster focused on "Predictors of Condom Use Among Connecticut High School Students". The poster was based on their Biostatistics project.

As part of her internship, **Abha Shrestha** participated in a pilot surveillance of a clostridium difficile infection with Michelle Soeters (MPH 2009), Ruthanne Marcus and Sharon Hurd of Yale University.

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