

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Study emphasizes early diagnosis PG 16

Grant to equip state to tackle disaster PG 19

LEARNING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Field experience bolsters student growth
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College of Public Health
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

FROM THE DEAN

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These are exciting times for the University of Georgia's College of Public Health. From continued, sustainable growth to new research and discoveries that are pointing the way to a healthier future, our students, faculty and staff are striving to make a difference here and beyond.

Consider what we've accomplished in just the past year — we've brought on 17 new faculty members, many stemming from hiring initiatives laid out by UGA Provost Pamela Whitten, named Dr. José F. Cordero as the Patel Distinguished Professor in Public Health and surpassed our highest total ever for research funding, already eclipsing \$9.5 million in the first four months of this fiscal year.

The College is also forging ahead with new initiatives in public health. With a gift of \$2.4 million, the College and The Forum Institute, a nonprofit think tank, are partnering to develop the first ever "Preconception to Infancy" Center of Excellence. Opening in Atlanta in 2017, the Center will be directed by Dr. Cordero.

And this is merely the tip of the iceberg.

We continue to expand our footprint on the Health Sciences Campus as the Institute for Disaster Management moved to its new building in October 2016. This move gets us closer to the long-term goal of consolidating all of the College's expertise and resources at one central location. IDM is led by Dr. Cham Dallas, a leader in disaster preparedness, and it houses a team of internationally recognized experts in emergency management, weapons of mass destruction, disaster modeling and public health.

October was a busy month for the College as we also hosted more than 300 public health professionals during the fifth

annual State of Public Health Conference. This yearly gathering features national speakers and brings together the top public health experts in Georgia in a spirit of collaboration as we work to tackle some of our biggest challenges.

This year's conference featured nationally respected and revered speakers, including Dr. Mary Guinan, a trailblazer for women in public health research; Dr. Alonzo L. Plough, the chief science officer at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; John Auerbach, the acting director for the CDC Office for State, Tribal, Local and Territorial Support; and Dr. Brenda Fitzgerald, the commissioner of the Georgia Department of Public Health.

The State of Public Health Conference is more than an academic exercise — it is a living example of our commitment to service and learning. That mission is central to who we are. Another way we fulfill that commitment is through our experiential learning and service learning efforts.

In this magazine, you'll learn more about our work in delivering high-value, high-impact opportunities for our students. This unique work not only ensures we are able to provide them with practical, real-world academic opportunities, but also showcases our commitment to provide purposeful services and meaningful solutions to communities.

The College of Public Health ultimately is the sum of its parts, with students, faculty and staff working in concert to identify, address and conquer the great challenges of our day.

This is our mission.

This is our commitment.

Sincerely,

Phillip L. Williams, Ph.D.

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NEWS & NOTES

► UGA INVESTS IN HEALTH INFORMATICS THROUGH HIRING INITIATIVE

This year, the College of Public Health welcomed two new faculty members recruited through the UGA Presidential Informatics Hiring Initiative, part of a larger effort to build on the University's record of using big data and to create new learning opportunities related to data analysis and security. UGA has long been an international leader in informatics, a broad field that encompasses the collection, classification, storage, retrieval, analysis and dissemination of massive data sets.

Dr. Dale Green joined the Department of Health Policy and Management as associate professor of health informatics in August. An expert in clinical informatics, Green has lead the implementation of electronic health record systems and developed population health analytics tools used to drive quality and efficiency improvements in the delivery of health care. Green has been a practicing physician in the Athens area for 23 years and is board certified in clinical informatics, internal medicine, and pulmonary disease and critical care medicine. He served as Athens Regional Medical Center chief medical information and quality officer from 2004 to 2012 and chief medical information officer at Cornerstone Health Care in North Carolina from 2012 to 2016. Green received his doctorate of medicine and MHA from the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill. He has served in numerous physician leadership positions and is a Fellow of the American College of Chest Physicians.

Steven Bellan joined the College as an assistant professor in the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics. Bellan's work uses statistical and mathematical models to better understand infectious disease burden and transmission dynamics. His research has focused on HIV epidemiology in sub-Saharan Africa and ebola vaccine efficacy in West Africa. Although still early in his career, Bellan has multiple publications in a number of highly ranked journals including Lancet and PLOS ONE, and has served as a technical consultant for the World Health Organization, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Bellan has a B.S. in evolutionary biology from Princeton University, and an MPH in epidemiology and a Ph.D. in environmental science, policy and management from the University of California, Berkeley.

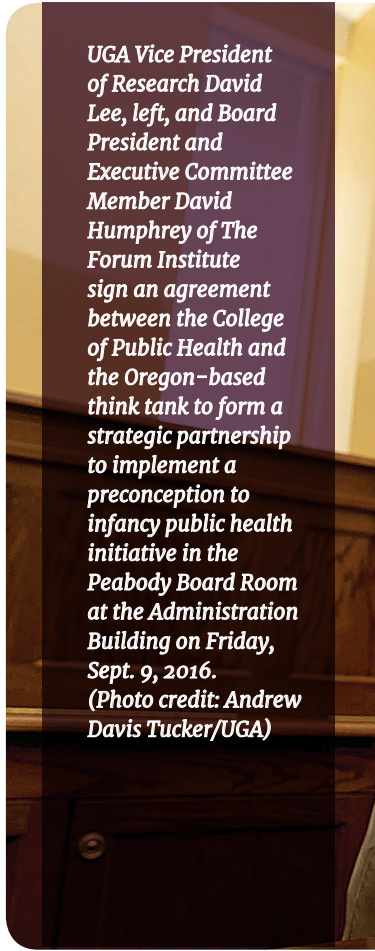
► NEW PARTNERSHIP AIMS TO IMPROVE PRECONCEPTION TO INFANCY CARE

The UGA College of Public Health has announced a new strategic partnership with The Forum Institute, an Oregon-based nonprofit think tank, to implement a first-of-its-kind preconception to infancy public health initiative for the state of Georgia.

The Forum Institute will provide \$2.4 million in funding to the UGA College of Public Health over two years to support the establishment of the P2i Center of Excellence, the nation's first center focused on preconception to infancy care. Dr. José F. Cordero, Patel Distinguished Professor of Public Health in the College of Public Health, will serve as director of the new center, which will open in Atlanta in 2017.

The Forum Institute established the Preconception to Infancy initiative, or P2i, on the conviction that existing strong science and clinical practice offer a means of improving outcomes and significantly reducing the incidence of chronic disorders among infants when women reduce exposure to toxins, ensure proper nutrition and maintain optimal health before and during pregnancy.

Cordero and the College of Public Health will lead the center's efforts in developing best practices for preconception care, while expanding current knowledge in the field through clinical research, statistical analysis and the publication and distribution of scientific findings. The College will also collaborate with The Forum Institute in developing curricula for physicians and mothers-to-be in preconception care and related topics.



UGA Vice President of Research David Lee, left, and Board President and Executive Committee Member David Humphrey of The Forum Institute sign an agreement between the College of Public Health and the Oregon-based think tank to form a strategic partnership to implement a preconception to infancy public health initiative in the Peabody Board Room at the Administration Building on Friday, Sept. 9, 2016. (Photo credit: Andrew Davis Tucker/UGA)



Pictured left to right are Dean Phillip Williams, The Forum Institute Executive Committee member Judi Rees, Dr. José F. Cordero, Vice President of Development and Alumni Relations Kelly Kerner, Provost Pamela Whitten, The Forum Institute Board Chairman Gleason Eakin, The Forum Institute Board President David Humphrey, The Forum Institute Executive Director of the P2i program Mary Closson, Vice President of Research David Lee, The Forum Institute fundraiser Gary Smith, and The Forum Institute Executive Committee member Lee Grossman. (Photo credit: Andrew Davis Tucker/UGA)



“WE ARE VERY PLEASED TO ESTABLISH THIS PARTNERSHIP WITH THE FORUM INSTITUTE TO ADVANCE THE PRECONCEPTION TO INFANCY PUBLIC HEALTH INITIATIVE,” SAID PHILLIP WILLIAMS, DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH. **“WITH DR. CORDERO, WE HAVE ONE OF THE LEADING EXPERTS IN CHILD AND MATERNAL HEALTH GUIDING THIS PROGRAM. HIS ROLE PLACES US IN AN IDEAL POSITION TO IMPLEMENT AN OUTSTANDING PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAM FOR GEORGIA RESIDENTS.”**

► COLLEGE HOSTS FIFTH ANNUAL STATE OF PUBLIC HEALTH CONFERENCE

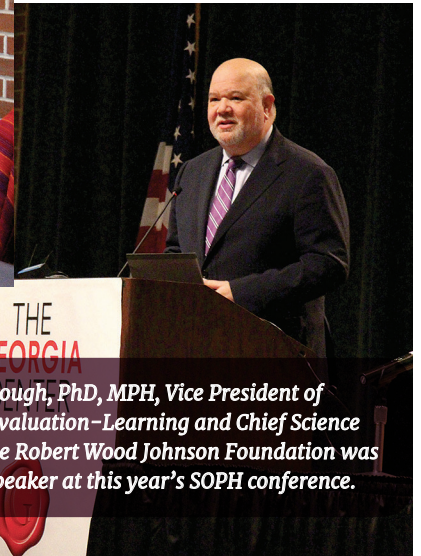
Researchers in the College of Public Health and other UGA departments shared their expertise alongside public health leaders from across the state during the fifth annual State of Public Health Conference held Oct. 18 at UGA.

This year's conference, which was the largest to date, featured numerous keynote speakers, including Alonzo Plough, vice president for research and evaluation and chief science officer at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, John Auerbach, associate director for policy at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Dr. Brenda Fitzgerald, commissioner of the Georgia Department of Public Health and state health officer. Research posters from attendees representing organizations and universities across the state addressed topics ranging from tobacco use to telemedicine.

"Our speakers emphasized the need for multiple disciplines and agencies to partner for the improvement of public health," said Marsha Davis, associate dean for outreach and engagement in the College of Public Health and conference organizer.



Mary Guinan, MD, PhD, one of the first medical scientists in America to identify and research the emerging AIDS epidemic, as well as the first woman to serve as the chief scientific advisor to the director of the CDC, was a special guest at this year's SOPH conference.



Alonzo L. Plough, PhD, MPH, Vice President of Research-Evaluation-Learning and Chief Science Officer at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation was a keynote speaker at this year's SOPH conference.

► CENTER FOR GLOBAL HEALTH NOW AN INSTITUTE

In recognition of its expanded mission in instruction and research, the Center for Global Health has become the Global Health Institute (GHI). The GHI, initially created as a center in 2009, will provide a platform for international public health research and educational initiatives at the College of Public Health and other health-oriented units at UGA.

Christopher Whalen, MD, the College's Ernest Corn Professor of Infectious Disease Epidemiology, was tapped by Dean Phillip Williams to lead the Institute in January 2016. A physician and epidemiologist, Whalen has maintained an active research agenda on tuberculosis in Africa since 1990.

With a new focus on building its critical mass of faculty, the Institute recruited two new faculty members this year. Juliet Sekandi, MD, DrPH, was hired as an assistant professor in the Institute. Sekandi is an accomplished scientist with expertise in global health systems, HIV and tuberculosis, and maternal-child health. Paula Davis-Olwell, Ph.D, a demographer with expertise in public health nutrition and medical anthropology, joined the GHI as an instructor. She has taught global health in the U.S. and in Africa for the past 15 years.

This push to recruit exceptional researchers continues thanks to a recent \$500,000 gift from former UGA Provost Karen Holbrook. The Karen and Jim Holbrook Distinguished Professorship will build upon existing strengths in global health research in the College and at the University and expand international collaborations within the GHI.

As for its educational mission, the GHI currently offers Certificates in Global Health to both undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Georgia. Both certificate programs not only provide structured coursework in global health, but feature a required experiential learning component that challenges students to engage in global health research with a faculty member, or tackle internships, both foreign and domestic, addressing global health. In addition to certificates, the Center offers an undergraduate minor.

► INSTITUTE OF GERONTOLOGY WELCOMES NEW DIRECTOR

In January 2017, Glenn Ostir, joined the College as the new director of the Institute of Gerontology and professor of health promotion and behavior. Ostir comes to UGA from the University of Maryland School of Medicine, where he served as a professor of gerontology, and director of the Division of Gerontology and Program in Aging, Trauma and Emergency Care (PATEC).

Ostir's research focuses on positive healthy aging, aging and resilience, and the application of telemedicine to older populations. He has more than 90 peer-reviewed publications on these and other topics, many of which have been published in prominent journals, such as the Journal of the American Geriatric Society, Archives of Internal Medicine, Psychosomatic Medicine, and Journal of the American Medical Association.

Ostir has a B.Sc. in statistics from the University of Manitoba, a B.A. in psychology from the University of Winnipeg, and a Ph.D. in sociomedical sciences from the University of Texas Medical Branch.



Dr. Glenn Ostir, Director of the Institute of Gerontology

► DrPH PROGRAM MOVES TO GWINNETT CAMPUS

The newly rebooted Doctor of Public Health (DrPH) Program held its first Open House at the UGA Gwinnett campus. Dean Phillip Williams welcomed more than 100 potential doctoral students to the event. Don Lloyd, assistant professor and DrPH transition coordinator, and Joel Lee, professor and director of the DrPH program, provided details of the revised degree program and fielded questions from attendees.

The restructured program, now administrated by the Department of Health Policy and Management, will be based at the Gwinnett campus to provide easier access for students working at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other Atlanta-based health care facilities and has been redesigned to produce a more vibrant, challenging and accommodating experience for working public health professionals.

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE REVISED PROGRAM:

- Based on the UGA Gwinnett campus with all required courses offered either at that location or online.
- The 57-credit hour curriculum is focused on management, leadership, and health policy and development, with available electives in gerontology, disaster management and global health.
- Classes will be offered on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 4:30 to 7:15 p.m.
- Three years of relevant work experience are required for admission to the DrPH Program.

Applications are being accepted until Feb. 15 for Fall 2018 with a targeted class size of 15 students. For more information, email drph@uga.edu.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OFFERS HANDS-ON EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS

By Johnathan McGinty

Should higher education be more like football?

It's not the most direct analogy, but, on some level, the answer is yes.

The best athletes invest countless hours in learning the plays they have to run, but spend even more time on the field practicing those plays over and over again. Each repetition and scrimmage during training is a firsthand experience that prepares the athlete to respond when game day arrives. They've got the on-the-field experience that makes them ready to think on their feet and to deal with both success and adversity.

While 'practice makes perfect' is a mantra that public health education has long embraced, it has become a new movement at the University of Georgia. Recognizing the value of hands-on experiences to enhance learning and position students for success after graduation, UGA is ushering in an era of experiential learning.

Undergraduate students will be required to complete an experiential learning requirement to graduate. These opportunities include participating in academic research, study abroad, service-learning, internships and other immersive experiences that put the skills taught in the classroom into practice in the field.

"Through undergraduate research, internships, study abroad, service-learning and other significant learning experiences, UGA students will learn to leverage course content against pressing issues beyond the classroom walls," said University of Georgia President Jere W. Morehead. "They will enhance problem-solving and critical thinking skills, and they will become better prepared for graduate school and careers in the 21st century."

While a new requirement for 2016, it's not a new concept for UGA. The University consistently ranks among the nation's top universities for study abroad participation with more than 8,100 UGA students participating in 421 service-learning course sections in the last academic year alone. In fact, once initiated UGA will be one of the nation's largest public universities with such a requirement.

"In public health especially, teaching isn't just about sharing knowledge. What we're trying to do is prepare students to be practitioners," said Mark Wilson, associate dean for academic affairs at the UGA College of Public Health. "We want them to feel confident and assured that they can go out and succeed in whatever discipline they've decided to pursue."

Experiential learning plays a vital role in helping students "get their hands dirty" by putting the education, expertise and skills they learn in the classroom into practice. It also plays an important role in fostering engagement on campus, improving students' ability to analyze information and helping to effectively prepare them for transition to either graduate school or the workforce.

While the requirement is new to UGA, it's not new to the College of Public Health. "We discovered that we were already engaging our students in experiential learning, but we just hadn't thought of it that way," said Mumbi Okundaye, MPH/DrPH program coordinator for the College. "We do have, within our ethos and mission as an accredited college of public health, a focus on competency-based education, and part of that within the context of public health requires some form of experiential learning."

HANDS-ON APPROACH

For students at the College, getting out into the field – whether it’s harvesting water samples along the Georgia coast or crunching a community’s trauma data – is absolutely essential to a well-rounded public health education.

Undergraduate students in health promotion and behavior are required to do a 300-hour internship, while MPH students must do 300 contact hours in the field before they graduate. Students seeking a DrPH drop down to a mandated 150 hours, primarily because they are required to have been in public health practice for three years before joining the program.

“A large part of our mission is to prepare the future public health work force, so experiential learning fits directly into that mission as we prepare students to enter the workforce,” said Nina Cleveland, who as DrPH/MPH practice coordinator oversees the College’s graduate experiential learning program.

While experiential learning is crucial for UGA’s educational mission, it’s particularly essential to the field of public health. As practitioners, public health professionals hone their skills by doing, taking the knowledge from the campus and applying it in real-world settings.


In epidemiology, for instance, students are taught various theories and learn what epidemiology does. However, it’s a leap to suggest that simply sitting through those classes prepare students to be the next generation of epidemiologists.

“When you learn to be an epidemiologist, you learn about developing surveys and how to take that data and analyze it,” said Cleveland.

“What you can’t learn sitting in a classroom are all the barriers that exist – and they do exist – to each of those steps. It’s like teaching a dentist how to fill a tooth in the classroom and perform on the first day there.”

Cleveland cited an example of conducting a survey to understand HIV transmission rates in men. While a classroom-based education can provide a student with the foundation of how to build a survey, it doesn’t prepare them for how to tackle the various logistical

This summer, fourth year health promotion major and CPH Undergraduate Ambassador Iva Betancourt helped connect residents of Denney Tower, a housing complex for low-income seniors, to the healthy food options available at Athens local farmers market. The program is a collaboration between Athens Transits’ Fresh Food Bus, Campus Kitchen at UGA and the Athens Community Council on Aging.



BSHP/MPH dual degree student Joshika Money interned with Campus Kitchen at UGA to help plan “Dinners at Denney,” a monthly dinner for the senior residents of Denney Tower. One Sunday per month, Joshika served home-cooked meals to residents, while providing nutrition education, SNAP applications assistance and fellowship.

challenges associated with implementing a survey.

Understanding that has enabled the College to craft an experiential learning program that gives students the real world practice they need, while building a comprehensive educational experience that ultimately delivers well-trained and workforce ready public health professionals.

Cleveland meets with MPH and DrPH students individually to craft a customized plan of success, connecting each of them with one of 300 sites the College has developed partnerships with over the last 10 years. Students are paired with agencies, businesses and organizations that best suit their professional aspirations and educational disciplines.

While those sites include high-profile institutions like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, many partners are located in Athens-Clarke County, giving the College a strong connection to its home community. Local sites include not-for-profits like Athens Land Trust, an organization that provides sustainable, affordable housing options to low-income residents, to community hospitals Piedmont Athens Regional Medical Center and St. Mary's Health Care.

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

The benefit of these opportunities go well past merely being able to apply the expertise acquired in the classroom in the field. For most students, it's the first time they're exposed to the litany of responsibilities and tasks that go with conducting a public health intervention with a segment of the population.

Mark Palen, director of emergency preparedness for District 2 Public Health, pointed to an exercise that exposed students to what it's like to manage the response to a public health disaster. Utilizing a drive-through flu vaccination clinic, the scenario offered a detailed simulation of how to provide needed care for a

large population in the wake of an emergency situation.

Students received training that was specific to that clinic and its nearby population and then were tasked with overseeing traffic control, registration and verification. While they had ample training for how to craft a survey or analyze data, how to effectively manage the logistical tasks that go hand-in-hand with managing a public health intervention were new to them.

Cleveland said one example that really reinforced that was the challenges the students had in initially relating to many of the patients.

“The students would talk to the patients and ask things like ‘have you ever had an adverse reaction to a flu shot,’ and they’d get looks like ‘what in the world do you mean by that,’” she said. “They soon understood that you have to get away from things like medical jargon and talk to people in ways they can understand. It was a light bulb moment for them. All the logistics that went into planning and executing the clinic project, they were like ‘holy cow, we didn’t realize that.’”

Palen said the exercise not only helped the district public health office execute the project, but also provided other positive benefits that rippled throughout its existing workforce.

“The students’ integration into the workforce was seamless and contributed to the health department in that county being able to remain and serve other clients, even while the exercise was taking place,” said Palen. “Additionally, by encouraging student participation in the after action report process, the environment was created for an influx of new ideas and improvement.”

DELIVERING VALUE

It's this type of positive experience that make the students such an invaluable part of the organizations they serve. While the students gain the practical experience to make them better public health practitioners, the agencies, businesses and organizations they work for benefit from the influx of new ideas and the availability of extra hands to tackle needed tasks.

“Most public health organizations don’t have oodles of money lying around, so when you can give them a person who can work for 20 hours a week for 15 weeks, that’s a huge boost,” Wilson said. “Plus, our students are freshly trained, and our partners tell us they learn as much from the students as they do during the internship.”

Dinner at Denney Tower

For Robert Hood, the opportunity to work at Athens Regional Medical Center introduced him to the realities of juggling a full-time job with varying tasks and responsibilities. Hood, who earned an MPH with a concentration in epidemiology in Fall 2015, had taken a class focusing on field epidemiology, but he said the practical experience at Athens Regional made him a better public health practitioner.

"It allowed me to get my hands on some real world data and get to work," Hood said. "In the classroom, we talk about the issues that come up, but once you get into the real world and see those types of issues play out, it changes your perspective."

Working closely with Athens Regional, the Georgia Department of Public Health, and the College of Public Health to establish a Regional Trauma Advisory Committee, Hood spent time analyzing and reviewing regional trauma data for the 10 counties comprising Georgia EMS Region 10. He used the data to craft survey questions for key stakeholders, assisted with assessments of that data and worked to use the result to find ways to improve the broader system.

In dealing with that data, Hood was forced to think through various contingencies and deal with the pressures and needs that can crop up when working in a comprehensive health system. It's that real-world experience that helps mold the students into professionals.

"Part of what we're doing is teaching them to think on their feet," said Wilson. "They're going to have to be self-sufficient and independent so they don't just go out there and say they know what to do, but be able to change on the fly because of people's behavior."

For all of the practical knowledge he gained during his experience at Athens Regional, Hood said the most important takeaway from his time there was the role he was playing in improving the community's health.

"Honestly, knowing that I had a positive impact on the community was very fulfilling for me," Hood said. "They can use the survey that I worked on to help them improve the trauma system, and hopefully that helps them save more lives."

One of the key drivers of the experiential learning movement is UGA's desire to mesh meaningful community service opportunities with more formal instruction.

Katie Darby Hein, assistant professor and undergraduate coordinator in the department of health promotion and behavior, has a passion for service learning and has incorporated the pedagogy into her courses for years.

In 2015, she was one of 19 faculty members selected as a UGA Service-Learning Fellow. The program, created in 2006 by the Office of Service-Learning, has allowed Hein to network with other service-learning practitioners across campus and translate her experiences into scholarship examining the unique benefits of service learning as a teaching tool.

Through service learning, she has witnessed students transition beyond the feel-good sentiment of helping others toward a more complex understanding of how their work addresses issues such as food insecurity, social isolation and health disparities.

"When I teach them about how to deconstruct social disparities, we can talk about social injustice because they have seen it," said Hein. "Students are thinking more critically about what they are learning."

Students also gain first hand experience dealing with the challenges and roadblocks found where public health interventions intersect with bureaucracy and politics, Hein added.

"It definitely provides an opportunity for students to learn the stuff you don't want to teach them," she said.

"But within an academic environment, we can then talk about strategies – what is safe to do, what is not safe to

PROFESSIONAL & ECONOMIC IMPACTS

A recent UGA study published in the *International Journal of Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement* found that a group of undergraduate students graduating in 2010 made about \$4,600 more annually in their first full-time job if they had participated in service-learning at UGA. They also received their first raise more than two-and-a-half months sooner than those who hadn't taken service-learning courses.

In addition, experiential learning at UGA has a \$19.2 million economic impact on the state, based on the salary potential of UGA students who engage in service-learning, according to one of the study's authors, UGA professor of agriculture and applied economics Jeffery Dorfman.

More information on UGA's experiential learning requirement is available at WWW.EXPERIENCEUGA.COM.

do – that can keep a project from derailing while making sure things are still done correctly.”

This semester, health promotion students in Hein's community health course (HPRB 3700) are developing skills in community health assessment by undertaking needs assessments with local community organizations as service-learning case studies.

One group of students from Hein's class is partnering with the Athens Community Council on Aging and Campus Kitchen to serve monthly meals to residents of Denney Tower, a subsidized housing community for low-income seniors in downtown Athens.

In addition to providing dinner and fellowship, the students help Denney Tower residents enroll in Senior SNAP, a program designed to make it easier for seniors to receive food stamp benefits through the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

Students in Hein's foundations class (HPRB 3020S) are also tackling service-learning projects with Athens-Clarke County's Wellness Benefits Program, AIDS Athens, The Cottage Sexual Assault Center & Children's Advocacy Center, and home-based hospice services Compassionate Care and Gentiva.

“In the end the benefits (of service-learning) are two pronged. Not only are students learning something, but the community is gaining something as well,” she said.

A LASTING IMPRESSION

Whether it's an internship or service-learning opportunity, the College has placed a priority on offering its students the types of high-quality, hands-on learning experiences to best enhance their education. Doing so best equips them to become the next generation of public health professionals ready to tackle the world's biggest health challenges.

As the College's representative on the University Curriculum Committee and service learning subcommittee, Hein has had a front row seat in UGA's efforts to implement its new experiential learning requirement across campus

“I really feel like we have it down,” said Hein. “The College has always had a vested interest in getting its students out in the world. It's a critical part in training public health professionals. Because of this the College can act as a leader across campus in experiential learning, just as UGA is leading the way for other higher education institutions.”

For Wilson, this model ties directly back into what the College should be doing to serve not only its students but the community.

“We have a unique mission to positively impact the health of science in Georgia, and that means we have to actually go out into the community and not sit up in an ivory tower, hoping that it can happen,” said Wilson. “Experiential learning is that key piece that helps us have that impact. I can give a student the knowledge in a classroom, but unless they go out and do it in a real world setting, you're not helping them fully develop that knowledge.”



Iva (right) with Seniors

► CPH IN ACTION



Diop Gant and Sarah Stubbs, undergraduate researchers in the College's Economic Evaluation Research Group, assisted the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) in handing out Yellow Dot Decals in Athens-Clarke County. The yellow, peach-shaped decals, when placed in the driver side rear window of a vehicle, alert first responders that vital and potentially lifesaving medical information is stored in the glove compartment.

Disaster management students partnered with North Georgia Health District 2, the Hall County Health Department, and the UGA Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) to conduct a drive-thru flu clinic at the J.A. Walters Family YMCA in Gainesville, Ga. Volunteers filled positions in traffic control, screening, registration and observation. This clinic gives District 2 the opportunity to test its plans to distribute medications to citizens during times of emergency. (Pictured: MPH student Quynh-Vu Dinh, CPH Practice Coordinator Nina Cleveland, health promotion major Kara Giannone)



MPH graduate Atefeh Paziraei interned with CARE International's CHAMP program, which is aimed at reducing HIV/STI infections among key populations in the central African country of Cameroon. Paziraei aided peer educators and psychosocial counselors in their work promoting HIV testing, medication adherence and safe sex practices.

MPH alumna and EERG researcher Becka Walcott, MBA/MPH students Angela Murcia and Gloria Berry, and HPAM professor and Fulbright Scholar Phaedra Corso traveled to Ecuador to survey the impact of a rural nursing intervention program and evaluate the cost-effectiveness of shipping container health clinics in the city of Quito. The UGA team partnered with Universidad San Francisco de Quito (USFQ), Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador (PUCE) and Quito Salud Pública for these projects.



OUTREACH IMPACTS

The benefits of experiential learning aren't limited to a better trained and higher earning workforce. These educational experiences allow students to make real impacts and provide immediate outreach to communities in need at home and abroad.

During the 2015 Spring semester, nearly 100 undergraduate and graduate students in the College of Public Health completed approximately 30,000 hours of on-site learning and service at 52 sites, the majority of which were located in Athens and North Georgia.

According to Independent Sector, a coalition of non-profits (charitable groups) that publishes research data on philanthropy, the 2014 estimated value of one hour of volunteer service was \$23.07. Based on this estimate, the service-learning efforts of UGA's public health students in one semester alone represented about a \$692,100 benefit to the community.

"We like to consider this as high-impact learning, and that's not just experiential learning," said Marsha Davis, associate dean for outreach and engagement at the College of Public Health. "Our students' efforts provide immediate benefits to the public health of communities, bringing together teaching, research and service. This is fostered by a culture of volunteerism and community activism."

Through these education experiences, public health students make a considerable contribution to improving public health in the communities in which they serve.

FACULTY

CORDERO NAMED PATEL DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR IN PUBLIC HEALTH

The College of Public Health has named one of its newest faculty members, Dr. José F. Cordero, as the first Gordhan L. and Virginia B. “Jinx” Patel Distinguished Professor in Public Health.

An internationally recognized researcher and public health leader, Cordero has dedicated his career to addressing maternal and child health, minority health and health disparities. He first joined the College in August 2015 as professor and head of its department of epidemiology and biostatistics.

“As the state of Georgia continues to struggle with poor ratings in infant and maternal mortality, we are very pleased to have one of the leading experts in child and maternal health join us at the College of Public Health,” said Phillip Williams, dean of the College. “Under Dr. Cordero’s guidance, the College and UGA will be able to expand its expertise in this area of critical need.”

Cordero served for 27 years in the U.S. Public Health Service at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. During his years at the CDC, he was the first Hispanic to attain the rank of assistant surgeon general and held a number of leadership positions focused on improving the health of mothers, children and adults in programs such as immunizations, birth defects and disabilities.

The most prominent of these roles included deputy director of the National Immunization program and founding director of the National Center for Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities.

Recently, Cordero was awarded a \$533,000, one-year grant from the NIH National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences to study the Zika virus, the risk of fetal infection among infected mothers in Puerto Rico whether symptomatic or asymptomatic, and to assess the impact of environmental influences and the risk of birth defects and neurodevelopment outcomes.

The grant is run through the PROTECT (the Puerto Rico Testsite for Exploring Contamination Threats) Center, of

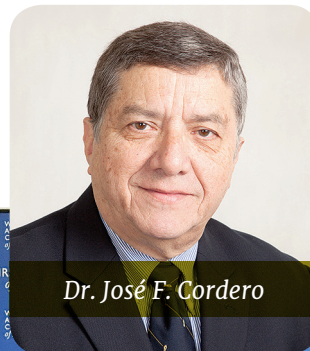
which Cordero is co-director. Since its founding in 2010, PROTECT has received two grants totaling \$23.5 million from the NIH’s National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences’ Superfund Research Program to conduct an interdisciplinary investigation into the complex relationship between groundwater contamination and the island’s extremely high preterm birth rate.

The program is expanding to examine the effects of prenatal exposures in the neurodevelopment of children born to mothers that participate in the PROTECT program. This new effort will develop the Center for Research on Early Childhood Exposure and Development (CRECE) in Puerto Rico, and UGA will be a key partner.

Cordero served as dean and professor of the University of Puerto Rico Graduate School of Public Health. He also serves on the board of trustees of the March of Dimes, a well-respected charitable organization dedicated to preventing childhood disease, birth defects, and premature births, and reducing infant mortality.

A native of Puerto Rico, Cordero obtained his medical degree from the University of Puerto Rico. He completed his residency training in pediatrics at Boston City Hospital, followed by a fellowship in medical genetics at Massachusetts General Hospital. He received his Master of Public Health from the Harvard School of Public Health.

The Patel Professorship was established with support from the UGA Research Foundation, Patel family members and UGA colleagues to honor Gordhan Patel and his wife, Jinx. Patel, a long-time UGA faculty member, dean of the Graduate School and former vice president for research, retired from the university in 2005, but he and his wife remain actively involved in the university and Athens community. His research focused on the molecular biology of chromosomal proteins.



Dr. José F. Cordero



DENTAL FILLINGS RAISE LEVELS OF MERCURY IN THE BODY

Dental surface restorations composed of dental amalgam, a mixture of mercury, silver, tin and other metals, significantly contribute to prolonged mercury levels in the body, according to new research from the UGA College of Public Health.

This research, which analyzed data from nearly 15,000 individuals, is the first to demonstrate a relationship between dental fillings and mercury exposure in a nationally representative population. The results were published online in the December 2016 print edition of the journal *Ecotoxicology and Environmental Safety*.



“Tooth decay is one of the most prevalent chronic diseases,” said Lei Yin, a scientist in the Department of Environmental Health Science and the study’s lead author. “I think a majority

of people have experienced dental fillings, but the kind of materials the dentist uses isn’t something that’s really discussed.”

Mercury exposure from dental fillings is not a new concern, but previous studies were inconsistent and limited, according to Xiaozhong “John” Yu, assistant professor of environmental health science and co-author of the study.

“This study is trying to provide the most accurate levels of exposure, which will form the scientific basis to make future risk assessment,” Yu said, adding that the study was the first to also control for age, education, ethnicity, race, gender, smoking and seafood consumption, which is a known contributor to mercury levels in the body.

The researchers further analyzed exposure by specific types of mercury and found a significant increase in methyl mercury, the most toxic form of mercury, related to dental fillings. Yu said this result suggests the human gut microbiota, a collection of microorganisms living in the intestines, may transform different types of mercury.

The results show that individuals with more than eight fillings had about 150 percent more mercury in their blood than those with none. The average American has three dental fillings, while 25 percent of the population has 11 or more fillings.

The study also looked at dental composite resins, a mercury-free alternative for dental fillings that can release small amounts of bisphenol A, or BPA, which may cause developmental or reproductive damage. The results found no association between dental fillings and urinary BPA, but further research is needed to understand BPA exposure from resin-based materials. – *Elizabeth Fite*

TEEN TOBACCO DEPENDENCE SHOULD BE TREATED WITH ‘SAME URGENCY AS OTHER DRUGS,’ STUDY SAYS

Substance abuse treatments that target issues such as serious drug and alcohol addiction are not frequently being used to also wean adolescents from tobacco, a UGA College of Public Health study finds.



Tobacco addiction in adolescents is often overlooked because it doesn’t carry with it the stigma that alcohol abuse and other serious drugs do, according to the study’s lead author, Jessica Muilenburg, associate professor of health promotion and behavior.

“(Tobacco) is a drug, but it’s not treated in the same capacity and with the same urgency as other drugs. We are saying to treat it with the same urgency, because relapse is less likely if you treat the nicotine as well.”

Muilenburg has focused much of her research on tobacco use in adolescents and young adults—considering treatment factors that might help them beat these behaviors permanently. For this study, published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*, she and co-authors Tanja Laschober from the University of Florida and Lillian Eby from the University of Georgia looked at addiction treatments for adolescents and young adults ages 12–28.

The researchers tracked down substance abuse centers throughout the U.S. and analyzed treatment practices in those considered adolescent-only clinics. To gather the necessary information, they completed surveys with each of the counselors in those 22 centers.

After analyzing several factors, the researchers found that a small number of counselors in these adolescent-only substance abuse treatment centers actually implemented some sort of tobacco cessation treatment when seeing patients.

Additionally, they found that a majority of these counselors do have the knowledge to implement tobacco cessation treatments and the ability to prescribe medications—such as the patch or nicotine chewing gum—to help adolescents quit. However, counselors don’t typically do so for the adolescents they are seeing.

Study results show the implementation of these programs needs to be more widely used for adolescents with substance abuse issues, Muilenburg explained.

The researchers also recommend that more counselor training be implemented. Right now, understanding how to treat tobacco-dependent individuals is not a requirement when counselors obtain their licensure. Considering tobacco’s ability to alter the brain and cause relapse, Muilenburg and study co-authors believe it needs to be taken more seriously. – *Sydney Devine*

RESEARCH

► STUDY LOOKS AT REASONS FOR DELAYED TUBERCULOSIS DIAGNOSIS IN UGANDA



Dr. Juliet Sekandi

Most studies of delayed tuberculosis diagnosis focus on the adverse effect of time elapsed between the onset of symptoms to reaching diagnosis and subsequent patient outcomes and control of community transmission.

A College of Public Health study takes a new angle on the issue and looks at the potential societal influence and prevention of diagnosis delay.

TB is an infectious bacterial disease that often attacks the lungs and affects 8 million people worldwide and kills 2 million yearly. The largest public health hazard related to TB lies in patients' inability to reach a quick diagnosis, as every step taken before seeking care from a TB provider represents potential transmission of the disease, according to the study's lead author Dr. Juliet Sekandi, who previously practiced medicine and specializes in infectious diseases. She is now an assistant professor in the department of epidemiology and biostatistics.

Sekandi's impetus for this specific research used the degrees of separation theory to study why practitioners see TB patients cycle through repeated diagnoses, defining each "degree" as a "step." The study found that TB patients surveyed in Kampala, Uganda, circled through four separate steps while seeking health care before reaching proper diagnosis and successful treatment and that strong community networks are vital to speeding up the process.

"I had to move away from the clinic and into the community that the TB patients came from to ask why they are coming back even after they've been given effective TB treatment," said Sekandi.

The study, published in the journal *BioMed Central Infectious Diseases*, used steps as the time variable as it

calculated how long patients spent navigating throughout their social networks, community and health care providers.

The researchers then split the steps into two categories: health professionals who specialize in TB care and those who don't. The latter group was found to represent a larger hurdle in a person's timely diagnosis.

The ideal number of steps is one, from a patient directly to a TB-care provider. However, the extensive and disparate network of the Ugandan health care landscape often results in patients cycling in and out of the health care system, seeing many providers who are not specialized in TB diagnosis or treatment, Sekandi said.

Patients spent 41 percent of the total time between noticing symptoms and diagnosis in the first step. Social networks represented the majority of the second step and ultimately led to a quicker diagnosis than steps to non-TB providers, which exemplifies the importance of community and social network support in minimizing time to diagnosis, she said.

Second to delay in deciding to seek care, the time spent navigating through non-TB providers represented substantial hurdles to a timely diagnosis and comprised 34 percent of total time spent seeking care, according to the study.

Based on the data, the researchers recommend three areas of TB intervention.

First, due to the extended delay in diagnosis represented by the first step —initiating the decision to seek care—the researchers advised that extensive community education campaigns be used in addition to periodic screening and routine outreach programs to increase knowledge of TB symptoms and assess specific needs of communities.

Sekandi said the goal is to create a community with the capacity to aid fellow community members' diagnosis of TB.

"We need to build critical mass of networks that have the right awareness," Sekandi said. "The patients are trying to get help; they are just ending up in the wrong places."

Researchers also suggest that because non-TB providers often cause extra delay in accurate TB diagnosis, they should obtain specialized training to recognize and diagnose the disease, or at the very least, be prepared to send patients to a proper TB-provider.

Lastly, TB providers should receive continuing medical education as well to reinforce existing diagnosis standards and their ability to suspect and avoid missed opportunities for TB diagnosis.

The research serves as a reminder of the necessary holistic approach to combating infectious disease, she said.

"Public health really needs the involvement of the patient, providers and the community," Sekandi said.

— Erica Hensley

► STUDY FINDS SAHARAN DUST AFFECTS MARINE BACTERIA, LARGE BLOOMS OF PATHOGEN VIBRIO FOUND

In a study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, researchers from the College of Public Health found that *Vibrio* bacteria respond rapidly to the influx of iron-rich Saharan dust, leading to large blooms of the potentially harmful bacteria in ocean surface water. The study, co-authored by postdoctoral student Jason Westrich and Erin Lipp, a professor of environmental health science, showed that iron in dust could cause test cultures of *Vibrio* to grow.

Vibrio bacteria, common to ocean waters worldwide, are probably best known for their ability to cause serious illness in humans and other marine organisms. *Vibrio* cases are increasing at a higher rate than many other bacterial pathogens in the U.S., which could be due in part to *Vibrio* bacteria populations in coastal waters expanding with rising sea surface temperatures, Lipp said.

The team traveled to sites in the Florida Keys and Barbados to measure the *Vibrio* growth during natural Saharan dust events. Not only did they observe that dissolved iron increased in ocean surface water as the dust arrived, but *Vibrio* grew from a background level of just 1 percent to almost 20 percent of the total microbial community within 24 hours of exposure, revealing that *Vibrio* could be important intermediaries in the biogeochemical cycling of iron, critical to many planetary processes.

"Knowing the connection between Saharan dust and *Vibrio* population blooms is significant from the perspective that we are able to track these dust events using satellites in real time," Westrich said. "This allows some predictive power to understand when there is an increased risk for *Vibrio* infection in humans and other marine organisms."

► WHEN LOVED ONES BATTLE CANCER, FAMILIES RELY ON WEB FOR INFORMATION MORE THAN SUPPORT



Carolyn Lauckner

Loved ones of cancer patients are likely to search for further information about the disease online but less inclined to seek emotional support from social media forums, according to a College of Public Health study published recently in the journal *Computers, Informatics, Nursing*.

It is fairly common for loved ones of cancer patients to develop depression or anxiety disorders as a result of the diagnosis, but there aren't many studies focusing specifically on cancer patients' caregivers and family members, said the study's author, Carolyn Lauckner. Lauckner, an assistant professor in the Department of Health Promotion and Behavior, surveyed 191 people whose loved ones were diagnosed with cancer in the past year or who were currently acting as caregivers to someone with cancer. More than three-quarters of participants searched online for information on a loved one's disease. Most looked for treatment options, prevention strategies and risk factors, and prognosis information.

"I was pleasantly surprised by the amount of people who said that they were looking for prevention information online and detection information because that shows that not only are they concerned for their loved one but they're also concerned about how they themselves can avoid cancer, which from a public health perspective is great," Lauckner said.

Lauckner ultimately wants to build on the information gleaned in this study to determine the most effective use of social media and technology to distribute cancer prevention and risk reduction messages to the public. - Leigh Beeson



Choice Zone West Neighborhood Team in the field.

OUTREACH

► UGA, ACC TEAMS CONDUCT DIY COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

More than 100 graduate students from UGA's School of Social Work and the College of Public Health, as well as Family Connection-Communities in Schools of Athens neighborhood leaders, administered surveys for eight weeks during fall 2016 in partnership with the Athens Wellbeing Project (AWP).

The mission of the AWP is to integrate planning efforts and improve outcomes achieved by local institutions, organizations and community stakeholders through the collection and sharing of an open-access, neighborhood-level, longitudinal dataset that is representative of the county's population.

In its inaugural year, the AWP included a 15- to 20-minute household survey designed by researchers at UGA. An interdisciplinary team facilitated by health policy and management assistant professor Grace Bagwell Adams in the College of Public Health included Jerry Shannon from the geography department in the Franklin College of Arts and Sciences; Amanda Abraham from the School of Public and International Affairs; Rebecca Matthew, Y. Joon Choi and Lemuel LaRoche from the School of Social Work; and Celia Eicheldinger with Research Triangle Institute International.

"We're asking basic questions, but the answers add up to a map—both literally and figuratively—of how to improve housing, transportation, lifelong learning, community safety, wealth and employment, civic vitality and health in Athens," Bagwell Adams said.

Following data collection, information will be analyzed by Bagwell Adams and the team and then disseminated to the public in summer 2017. For more information, visit athenswellbeingproject.org.

— Delene Porter

"We're asking basic questions, but the answers add up to a map—both literally and figuratively..."



GETTING READY FOR AN OUTBREAK

COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTE
CHARGED WITH PREPARING GEORGIA FOR EBOLA

The Institute for Disaster Management was awarded \$756,000 in new federal funding this past year to design and direct new Ebola emergency response initiatives for the Georgia health care system.

Since 2006, the Institute for Disaster Management has been contracted by the Georgia Department of Public Health to manage the state's health care community preparedness program by designing and implementing disaster exercises for hospitals, nursing homes and other health care organizations across the state. The new grant increases the Institute's total budget for the upcoming fiscal year to \$1,260,000 and further expands the College's disaster preparedness role within the state of Georgia.

"Georgia, a major entry point for people coming into the U.S. from Africa, has really been doing very well in screening and monitoring potential Ebola patients, but we still have to be diligent about understanding who we are treating, what screening/triage mechanisms are implemented and transferring them to appropriate definitive care sites," said Curt Harris, an assistant professor of health policy and management and the Institute's associate director.

"This new program will be essential in getting our hospitals and emergency medical services on the same page about recognizing symptomology and implementing infection control measures for Ebola."

Georgia is divided geographically into 14 health care coalitions, each a collaborative network of hospitals, public health departments, law enforcement, local businesses, emergency management agencies and other health care organizations organized to respond to mass casualty and catastrophic events in a given region.

The number of stakeholders in each region varies. In some regions, the Institute may work with as few as eight hospitals while in others the number of participating institutions approaches 50.

"The vast majority of what we do is centered around what is referred to as a hazard vulnerability analysis. This annual report identifies the top hazards that may affect demand for a health care facility's services or its ability to provide those services," Harris said.

The Institute uses two types of exercises to better prepare health care institutions and surrounding communities for potential disaster scenarios. The first type—discussion-based "tabletop" exercises—provide decision makers from the health care community and community leaders an opportunity to sit at a table and discuss plans, policies and procedures that relate to specific disaster scenarios listed under the hazard vulnerability analysis. The second type—operations-based or "full-scale" exercises—is a "boots on the ground" simulation of these disaster scenarios that tests the abilities of various agencies to operationalize their plans, policies and procedures in a no-fault environment. Communication and coordination procedures between the various agencies are also tested.

Each year, the College facilitates a tabletop and a full-scale exercise in three to four regions across Georgia. The Institute's new funding will support its faculty, staff and students as they lead additional tabletop exercises on Ebola preparedness for each of the 14 coalitions in the state.

"This new program will be essential in getting our hospitals and emergency medical services on the same page about recognizing symptomology and implementing infection control measures for Ebola."

STUDENTS

► EPIDEMIOLOGY STUDENTS RECEIVE SCHLUMBERGER FELLOWSHIPS FOR WOMEN IN STEM

Two epidemiology doctoral students, María Eugenia Castellanos and Dr. Jane Mutanga-Mutembo, have received 2016–2017 Schlumberger Foundation Faculty for the Future Fellowships. These one-year, renewable grants provide women scientists from developing and emerging countries up to \$50,000 to pursue advanced degrees in a science, technology, engineering or mathematics field.

Recognizing the link between science, technology and socioeconomic development, as well as the role of education in realizing individual potential, the Schlumberger Foundation established its flagship program in 2004. Since then, 600 women from 78 emerging countries have received Faculty for the Future fellowships to pursue advanced graduate studies at top universities abroad. This year, the Foundation reviewed over 1,000 applications, ultimately awarding 49 new fellowships and renewing another 169.

Castellanos' fellowship will fund her research identifying the risk factors associated with tuberculosis transmission in Guatemala and how they contribute to the spread of the disease in the Guatemalan population.

"The leading causes of death in Guatemala are preventable and treatable infectious diseases," Castellanos said. "Tuberculosis, in particular, is an illness that affects the most vulnerable people and one that we have not been able to reduce the prevalence of in the last 10 years."

For her project, Castellanos is analyzing isolates of the bacteria that causes mycobacterium tuberculosis from patients at Clínica Familiar "Luis Angel García," an HIV specialty clinic within Guatemala City's General Hospital.

HIV-positive persons are at particular risk for TB infection. Her research will not only identify the strains of TB more prevalent in this vulnerable population, it will also look at the clinical and epidemiological risk factors that might increase a patient's chance of having a recent transmission of this disease.

"If we understand the main risk factors that lead a patient to have a particular strain of TB, we can create interventions that will allow health policymakers in Guatemala to direct targeted TB control measures at high-risk populations," she said.

After the completion of her degree at UGA, Castellanos plans to return to Guatemala to build her own research



María Eugenia Castellanos



Dr. Jane Mutanga-Mutembo

program in tuberculosis and ultimately, she hopes, participate in the establishment of a leading research center for infectious diseases in the Central American region.

Castellanos is the second doctoral student from the College's Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics to receive the prestigious and highly competitive international award. Dr. Jane Mutanga-Mutembo, whose fellowship was renewed for a second year, is developing mobile technology to help people living with HIV in Zambia.

"HIV has changed from being an acute condition to a chronic disease that people can live with for a long time as a result of antiretroviral medication," said Mutanga-Mutembo, a trained physician who also holds a clinical position in the Department in Pediatrics and Child Health at Zambia's Livingstone General Hospital.

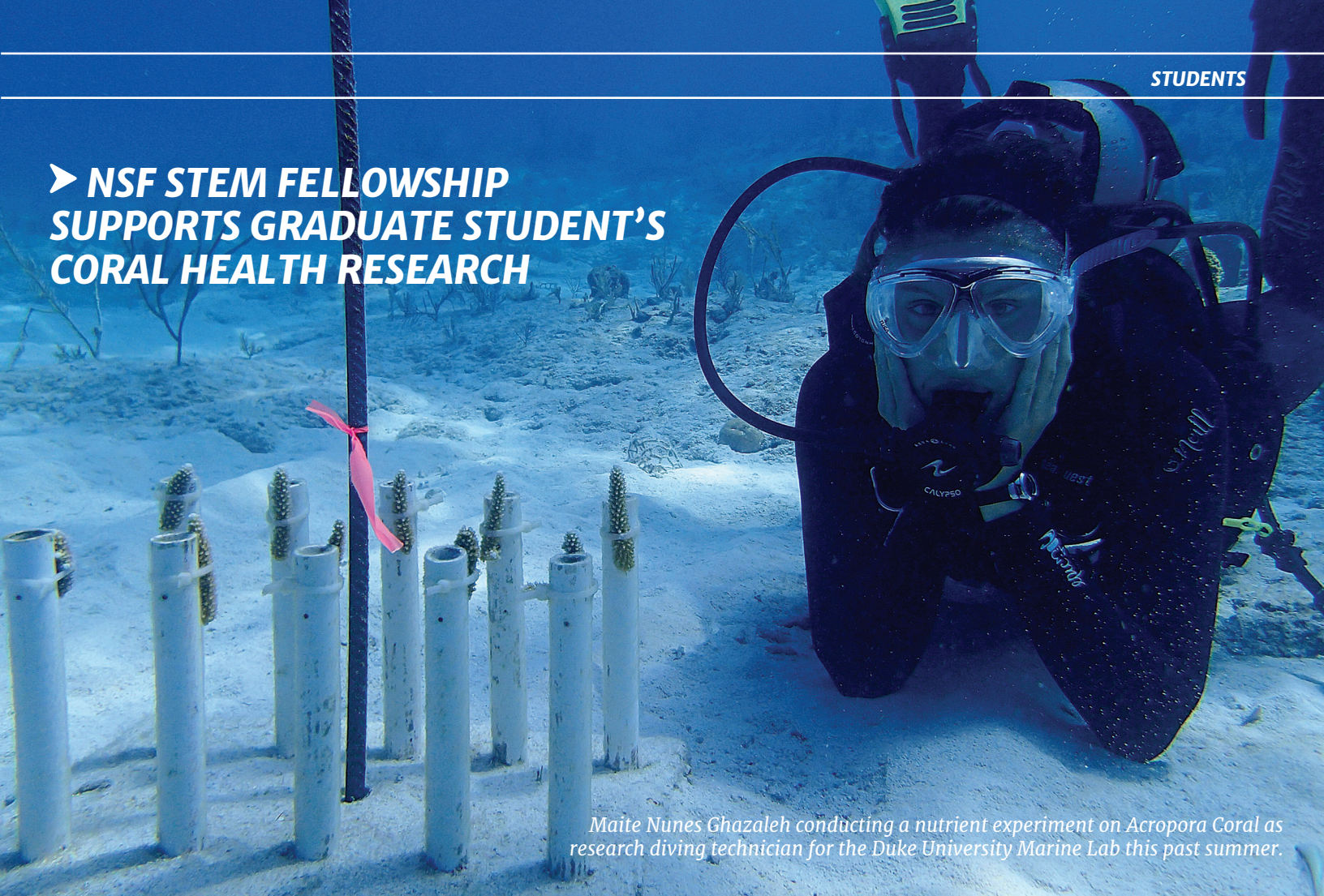
"Antiretroviral medication must be taken consistently to make sure the HIV virus is suppressed," she said. "A lot of my young patients are orphans who are being looked after by their grandparents, older siblings or other relatives. It's challenging to make sure that they take their medications correctly and daily."

Mutanga-Mutembo is addressing this issue by developing mobile technology capable of sending interactive text messages that remind caregivers about when medications need to be taken while keeping track of the patient's adherence to treatment.

Mobile phones have become widely available in Zambia and most of Africa. According to current estimates, nearly 78 percent of Zambia's adult population owns a mobile phone.

By building on mobile-health solutions currently supported by the Zambian government, Mutanga-Mutembo hopes to be able to offer the service free of charge. If successful, this new technology could be expanded to help patients manage other chronic diseases, such as hypertension and diabetes.

► NSF STEM FELLOWSHIP SUPPORTS GRADUATE STUDENT'S CORAL HEALTH RESEARCH



Maite Nunes Ghazaleh conducting a nutrient experiment on Acropora Coral as research diving technician for the Duke University Marine Lab this past summer.

Maite Nunes Ghazaleh, a second-year doctoral student in environmental health science at the College of Public Health, was awarded a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship to fund her research on coral health. These highly competitive awards recognize and support outstanding graduate students in science, technology, engineering and mathematics disciplines.

"The future for our coral reefs is looking pretty dim as of right now, especially when we consider how the progressing El Niño and warming ocean temperatures have contributed to bleaching most of our coral," said Ghazaleh. "What we scientists need to do is understand the factors that play into coral disease, especially at a time when they are so vulnerable."

Through her research, Ghazaleh hopes to help describe the mechanisms behind coral disease, such as the conditions that make coral more susceptible to illness, and the role that coral-associated microbes have in disease development. A healthy coral reef could mean better and safer water quality for both tourists and locals.

Ghazaleh, who is also a UGA Graduate School Presidential Fellow, was one of 2,000 fellows selected nationwide from nearly 17,000 applicants for the 2016 NSF competition. Fellows benefit from a three-year annual stipend of \$34,000 along with a \$12,000 cost of education allowance for tuition and fees, and opportunities for international research and professional development.



Maite Nunes Ghazaleh collecting coral mucus from Porites as research diving technician for the Duke University Marine Lab this past summer. As an undergraduate, she participated in research at the UNC Institute of Marine Science, Duke University Marine Lab, and the NOAA Southeast Fisheries Science Center as a NOAA Ernest F. Hollings Undergraduate Scholar.

DONATION WILL CREATE NEW ENDOWED PROFESSORSHIP GIFT BUILDS UPON COLLEGE'S GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH RESEARCH

Thanks to a generous gift of \$500,000, the Karen and Jim Holbrook Distinguished Professorship and Distinguished Graduate Fellowship will enhance the UGA College of Public Health's efforts in the field of global health.

Karen Holbrook served as UGA provost and senior vice president for academic affairs from 1998 to 2002 before being named president of The Ohio State University. Jim Holbrook is a retired oceanographer and past deputy director of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Pacific Marine Environmental Research Laboratory in Seattle.

The gift reflects the Holbrooks' lifelong commitment to higher education, the health sciences and global collaboration, as well as their strong affection for UGA. The UGA Foundation is providing an additional \$250,000 for the distinguished professorship in recognition of Karen Holbrook's transformative tenure as provost at UGA and to honor her remarkable service record in higher education.

"In addition to her enduring contributions at UGA as provost, Dr. Holbrook has served as an intellectual and administrative leader at some of the most prominent public research universities in the country," said President Jere W. Morehead. "She has remained a close and supportive friend of the UGA community throughout her career, and we are deeply honored that she and Jim have decided to make this generous gift to UGA at this time."

Together, the Holbrook Distinguished Professorship and Graduate Fellowship will build upon existing strengths in global health research throughout the College, increase international collaborations and expand experiential learning activities for students in international public health.

During Karen Holbrook's tenure as provost, she advocated for new programs in the biomedical and health sciences, which eventually led to the creation of the College of Public Health. Throughout her career, she has served as an advocate and catalyst for international research collaboration, and she continues to build relationships between institutions of higher education in the U.S. and abroad.

"I was very fortunate to work with colleagues at UGA during a time of real transformation and expansion into new program areas," Holbrook said. "It is so gratifying to see many of those ideas have taken root. Now seems like a good time to invest in realizing more of the College's potential for conducting

meaningful international research and to emphasize the impact this activity can have for students."

Holbrook is now a well-established higher education expert and consultant who has worked with a number of educational institutions at the international level. She currently serves as interim president at Embry Riddle Aeronautical University and is on the boards of the Institute of International Education, King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, CRDF Global, and Bio-Techne. She was a past board chair for Oak Ridge Associated Universities.

Holbrook's academic resume includes serving as vice president for research and dean of the University of Florida's Graduate School, senior vice president for global affairs and international research at the University of South Florida and associate dean for scientific affairs at the University of Washington School of Medicine, where she was also a professor of biological structure who directed a heavily funded research laboratory in dermatology.

She began her career as a biomedical researcher and National Institutes of Health MERIT Award Investigator. She earned bachelor's and master's degrees in zoology at the University of Wisconsin in Madison and a doctorate in biological structure at the University of Washington School of Medicine.

"The College of Public Health could not have originated when it did without the clear vision of Dr. Karen Holbrook, who recognized both a significant need for more public health professionals in Georgia and a way that UGA could contribute to the solution," said Phillip L. Williams, dean of the College. "Her decision now, 15 years later, with a different but equally clear and forceful vision for enhancing international research, will be just as significant as her earlier role."



MEET THE UGA COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH'S NEWEST DONOR:

Isabella Westrich and The Nature Club

A group of concerned and passionate young citizens in the Athens area – known as The Nature Club – have come together to make a \$200 donation to the College of Public Health's Department of Environmental Health Science to support water quality testing efforts.

The Nature Club was started by young students in the Normaltown neighborhood in Athens.

At the helm is 10-year-old Isabella Westrich – a passionate leader who is looking to make an impact. The club was started five years ago when the group of students decided to do something about issues that concerned them related to the environment. Current members of The Nature Club include August (age 12), Riley (9), Avery (9), Clara (7), Thomas (7), Rose (6), Coralie (6) and Blythe (5).



“We like the environment, and we want to help,” said Isabella.

The Nature Club's primary concern in Athens is the water quality in Brooklyn Creek, part of which runs through Athens' Normaltown neighborhood. Isabella's father, Jason Westrich, is an ecologist and postdoctoral researcher in the lab of Erin Lipp, a professor in the Department of Environmental Health Science. With her dad, Isabella learned about water quality testing and began helping take samples from Brooklyn Creek. The high rates of E. coli were very concerning, and this helped fuel her passion to want to keep the environment healthy and safe. Isabella and her fellow club members wanted to do something to positively impact the environment and so they set to work.

To raise awareness and earn money, the Nature Club set up a Nature Museum in Normaltown for guests to tour and make a donation. Included in their collection are two horseshoes found in Brooklyn Creek, fossils, unique rocks from various locales, insects and other items. Additionally, Isabella put together a neighborhood newsletter that addresses environmental issues and has generated income through subscriptions. Finally, they have collected funds through sales of homemade decorative items. The Club also participates in service by picking up litter and keeping Brooklyn Creek clean.

“We are so proud of the work of Isabella and the Nature Club and so grateful that they have decided to donate some of their hard-earned money to this important issue,” said Lipp.

The Nature Club plans to keep on hosting events and earning money to give back. In addition to this gift, they also have plans to donate to the World Wildlife Fund, another passion of Isabella's.

Private giving is critically important to our work, and we invite you to follow the lead of Karen and Jim Holbrook, The Nature Club and many other alumni, faculty, staff, and friends in supporting our efforts. From \$10 to \$10,000, gifts of all sizes positively impact our students, support research, and make a difference in the health of communities. Make a gift today by visiting giving.uga.edu/publichealth.

Please stay in touch, follow us on social media, and drop in for a visit to the Health Sciences Campus. For assistance with giving, scheduling a visit, or general inquiries, reach us at: 706.542.2590 or cphalumni@uga.edu.

Thank you and GO DAWGS!

Sincerely,

GINNY INGELS

Director of Development



College of Public Health UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Rhodes Hall – 105 Spear Road
University of Georgia
Athens, Georgia 30602

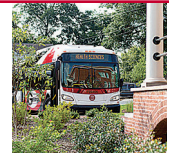
ON THE FRONT COVER:

Health policy and management assistant professor Grace Bagwell Adams, with the help of College of Public Health students, led a DIY health assessment study in Athens-Clarke County.

READ THE STORY ON PAGE 18

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