PROMOTING HEALTHIER AND SAFER WORKPLACES AND WORKERS
Each Spring, as the academic year comes to an end, I become inspired by the newest class of graduates entering the field of public health. This year, in particular, I am extremely proud of the inaugural class of undergraduate students who earned their Bachelor of Arts in Public Health from the UIC School of Public Health. I am confident that the public health framework they received during their time with us will impact the way they see the world around them. Read on page 3 how they believe a public health education will inform their future career paths.

Also in this issue of Healthviews, I’m pleased to share news and accomplishments of our students, alumni and faculty. On page 2, you’ll read about two of our students who saw a need on the UIC campus to address the stigma of mental health. In true public health style, they did something about it and formed the Mental Health and Disability Alliance.

On pages 4–5, you’ll meet three alumnae who are among the movers and shakers in the world of public health policy. These women are improving the public’s health through legislative action at the local, state and federal levels.

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Mental health disorders are common. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, about one in four adults suffer from a diagnosable mental health disorder in a given year. Yet despite its prevalence, it is often a taboo topic, one fraught with a tremendous amount of stigma. A new student organization at UIC, the Mental Health and Disability Alliance (MHDA), plans to address barriers surrounding mental health and disability.

The brainchild for such an alliance was John Capua, a first year student in the division of epidemiology and biostatistics. Capua, along with other public health students, founded MHDA because he “wanted to establish an organization on-campus that brings attention to issues revolving around mental health and disability.”

The campus lacked an organization that approached mental health and disability from an interdisciplinary perspective. Members of the alliance hope that by engaging all members of the UIC community, they can reduce stigma and create a community dialogue through research and advocacy.

“A lot of literature suggests that people who have these conditions don’t seek help because they’re afraid of being stigmatized by the public,” said Capua. “That’s what we want to try and break down.”

Capua works for the Asians with Disabilities Outreach Project Think-Tank (ADOPT), where he helps to develop vocational rehabilitation outreach programs to increase the capacity and quality of service. “My primary role involves assisting the research team in quantitative and qualitative data collection, analysis, and interpretation,” he said. He chose to pursue an advanced degree in public health because he wanted to gain a variety of skills in applied research methods, especially within the context of population health.

Ariel Willingham, who earned her MPH in epidemiology in May 2014, was invited to join Capua during MHDA’s initial planning phase. She got involved because she feels the field of public health should address mental health and disability concerns through education programs, research, policies, and system changes. “Public health organizations need to work together to create a safe space for open dialogue on how to address the stigma associated with mental health and disability.”

As an intern with the American Cancer Society, Willingham is working on the Illinois Colorectal Cancer Screening Initiative where she is “looking at health disparities and ways of preventing them,” she said. She loves the investigative side of working with numbers and appreciates the opportunity to interact with patients. “You hear testimonials and you understand the larger importance of your work. Each variable, each number, is a real person.”

Capua and Willingham say they started MHDA because they wanted to approach mental health and disability from a new perspective. “We want a broad perspective on what mental health is. We don’t want just a medical or biological point of view on this issue, we want the humanities aspects, the social aspects, the cultural aspects,” Capua said.

Part of spreading the word and presenting multiple views on the issue will involve partnering with various UIC and community organizations to organize lectures, events, research agendas and community engagement.

“It’s very unique in terms of its membership,” Capua explained. “Undergraduates, graduate students, staff and professionals are working together.” With about 50 members, MHDA has already hosted two events on campus and has several more planned in the coming months.

As part of Brain Injury Awareness Month, for example, the group collaborated with the Epilepsy Foundation of Greater Chicago and the Public Health Alliance for a workshop called “Epilepsy 101.”

“It’s really important to discuss and open dialogue that it’s okay to have this mental health issue, it’s okay to have depression, it’s okay to have PTSD, it’s okay to have these conditions,” Capua said. 

As a member of the UIC School of Public Health’s inaugural graduating class of undergraduate students, tell how we a Bachelor’s degree in public health will inform your future career path.

THE NEWEST MEMBERS OF THE UIC SPH COMMUNITY WEIGH IN...

This degree will provide me with a great base of knowledge to tackle the multiple problems that continue to plague our society. My future career goal is to work in health education and I hope to influence and become a voice for those whose voices have been muted by society.

– Aderoju Oshodi

The main focus for public health is to improve the health and quality of life not solely for one patient, but for a whole community or population by using prevention, surveillance, and promotion. All of these techniques I learned through the public health undergraduate program at UIC.

– Matthew Moy

Public Health has taught me that collaboration is the key to success. We can make a difference by working together. My education has inspired me to work hard in improving the lives and health of populations all over the world.

– Aneta Gil

My Bachelor’s in Public Health will inform my perspective and influence my career aspirations to be rooted in social justice. I’ll work towards eliminating social disparities and increasing political representation for minorities.

– Gabriela Illa

A Bachelor’s degree in Public Health helped me decide that I would like to further my career in public health. I plan on working with AmeriCorps after graduation and then returning to school to work on my MPH.

– Jameṣetta Mator

As a student in public health, I have gained a better grasp on the depth and breadth of issues in our world. Moving forward into my future career I know that having a Bachelor’s in Public Health will help me to create better solutions in all areas of my life.

– Sharon Mwale
Laura Wooster (MPH ’01)

Laura Wooster is the Director of Congressional Affairs for the American Osteopathic Association (AOA). Serving as the professional organization for osteopathic physicians and the American Osteopathic Association (AOA). Laura Wooster is the Director of Congressional Affairs for the American Osteopathic Association (AOA). Serving as the professional organization for osteopathic physicians and the American Osteopathic Association (AOA).

"My day-to-day is fairly varied," explains Ms. Wooster. Policy development is a significant part of what she does and she stresses how carefully it must be approached. "A policy change in one part of the healthcare system can very easily have severe unintended consequences on another part of the system.

In addition to her work involving policy development, Ms. Wooster is responsible for the overall strategy development on the key issues most important to the AOA membership. Two such issues are Medicare physician payment reform and Graduate Medical Education funding. She recently met with Senator Tim Scott of South Carolina and AOA President, Dr. Norman Vinn, to discuss a bill that would permanently repeal the Sustainable Growth Rate formula for Medicare so that physician payment rates are not subject to annual cuts.

Ms. Wooster feels that her public health background has given her a comprehensive understanding of the entire healthcare system. "I've been able to apply that understanding to my work in representing different sectors of the system throughout my career in D.C., from payers, to hospitals, and now physicians. Most importantly, my public health background ensured that I always keep a patient-centered approach at the forefront."

Mary Doi, MD (MS ‘10)

"I think it is important for all physicians in training and in practice to have an understanding of the role of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in drug development and in drug safety, and to understand what their important role could be in interacting with the FDA," says Dr. Mary Doi, who works as a medical officer on the Safety Team in the Division of Neurology Products in the Office of New Drugs in the Center for Drug Evaluation and Research. In this role, Dr. Doi monitors the safety of neurology drug products to inform regulatory decisions. She reviews and evaluates the safety data of New Drug Applications and new safety signals once a drug is approved. "I analyze the safety data from passively reported adverse events, randomized controlled trials, observational epidemiologic studies, passively reported adverse events, and the medical literature."

She credits a strong background in internal medicine and experience in patient care, as well as her public health training, to being able to work on issues that have broad, wide-ranging impact. "I had always wanted to focus on the prevention of disease even while I was in medical school," explains Dr. Doi. This desire grew stronger the longer she was in clinical practice, "as I envisioned making a broader and more significant impact with a career in public health focused on disease prevention." This is when she decided to enter the UIC School of Public Health to gain a career in public health.

Dr. Doi knows that she is making a difference on both national and international levels with regards to drug safety. Her work is crucial to determining how best to communicate specific drug risks to the healthcare community and to patients through the prescription information for the drug, the medication guide targeted to patients, or drug safety communications that are directed at the healthcare and patient communities. "I'm involved in developing approaches to mitigate the risk of a particular drug, taking into account the overall public health considerations, the impact on the healthcare system, and the impact on individual patients."

Margie Schaps (MPH ’78)

As the Executive Director of the Health & Medicine Policy Research Group (HMPRG), Margie Schaps oversees the entire operation of the independent center that conducts research, educates and collaborates to advocate policies and impact health systems. Her goal is to improve the health status of all people in Illinois by promoting health equity. All of the policy work conducted at HMPRG under Ms. Schaps' leadership strives to promote social justice and challenge inequities in health and healthcare.

Ms. Schaps' specific policy expertise is in health systems reform, safety net system development, and women's health. She is passionate about creating a just health system that will improve the health of the public. She speaks nationally and locally on a variety of health systems issues, and has published articles on women's health issues, healthcare safety net issues, and health system reform. "My public health background provides me with a lens through which I view all public policy," she explains. "I learned the fundamentals of what it means to have an equitable society, that health and public health are inextricably linked to all of the social determinants of health, including income, race, gender, access to housing, transportation, food security, and more. All public policy is health policy to me."

Developing a career in public health policy is not for people who want fast results. "You have to be in it for the long haul," says Ms. Schaps, who just celebrated her twentieth year as HMPRG's director. Despite the work being very hard at times, she explains that there isn't anything else she'd rather be doing. "Public health policy is about identifying the root causes of health inequalities and defining policies that can address them. To be able to build a coalition, define a problem, and develop policy solutions — what could be more rewarding?"
Making a Difference in the Health of Populations Around the World

**Haiti**

Alyssa Budoff, MPH candidate in the Community Health Sciences division and the Global Health concentration, received the Boren Fellowship to spend ten months in Haiti, engaging in linguistic and cultural immersion, and furthering the development of a community-informed disaster risk reduction (DRR) training program. She will begin her experience with a three-month intensive Creole program, which will include 15-20 hours per week of classroom instruction, field trips to historical sites, and cultural discussions.

**Libya**

In March, UIC SPH Dean, Paul Brandt-Rauf, had the opportunity to visit Liberia at the invitation of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. He met with various members of the public health community in the capital of Monrovia, where they discussed the public health training and research needs of Liberia and how UIC SPH could partner with them to help meet these needs.

**Grenada**

In March 2014, Rohan D. Jeremiah, Assistant Professor in Community Health Sciences, continued to facilitate global public health practice opportunities for US-based public health students traveling to Grenada, West Indies. Fourteen students engaged in a variety of local topics and issues including the dissemination of culturally adapted health education to tourism industry workers, and contributing to the development of the country’s national alcohol policy. Students interacted with government ministries, local researchers and community-based organizations seeking to improve the health of Grenadian communities.

**India**

Rebecca Liebman (MPH ’06) been selected for a 2014-2015 Fulbright U.S. Student Award to India. She will be conducting a qualitative research study aimed to improve quality care for preterm babies in healthcare systems that serve urban slum areas in Delhi. The study will determine the barriers to utilization of Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC), an alternative for mothers of preterm infants that promotes skin-to-skin contact between mother and child and exclusive breastfeeding.

**Botswana**

Through the Peace Corps Master’s International Program, Community Health Sciences student, Jessica Ruggiero, is working in Botswana as a School and Community Liaison for Life Skills. Her work at a primary school in a small rural village includes running an after school leadership club, educating students on a variety of health topics, and planning a girls empowerment camp.

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PROMOTING HEALTHIER WORKPLACES

The UIC School of Public Health is known for translating its research into practice and does so through various programs that directly impact communities. One such program is the Illinois Occupational and Environmental Health and Safety Education and Research Center (Illinois ERC). Housed at UIC School of Public Health (SPH) and funded by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), Illinois ERC is a recognized leader in the national and international movement to promote healthier and safer workplaces and workers. It is the ambition of Illinois ERC to improve, promote, and maintain the health of workers and communities.

“We do this through innovative and interdisciplinary activities,” says the center’s director, Lorraine M. Conroy, ScD, CIH. Over the past 30 years, Illinois ERC has worked with professional associations, government agencies, other university and college programs, and individuals to understand and address the occupational safety and health training needs regionally, nationally, and internationally. “We work to enhance the expertise of employers, workers organizations, and communities through outreach and technical assistance.”

ERCs were first established by NIOSH in the mid-1970s to address the increased awareness of occupational hazards and interest in worker protection. Since their inception, each ERC has acted as a major occupational health and safety resource with the ultimate goal of preventing workplace injuries and illnesses. “Workplace hazards can be devastating, so prevention of such occurrences can have a significant impact on people’s lives,” says Conroy. ERCs do this by supplying the region with well-trained practitioners and researchers, and by engaging the community through continuing education.

Illinois ERC educates graduate students to be professionals and researchers by providing MS and PhD training in six academic programs: industrial hygiene/hazardous substances academic training, occupational medicine, occupational health nursing, occupational safety, occupational and environmental epidemiology, and agricultural safety and health. In addition, the Targeted Research Training program supports interdisciplinary research training in three areas: Underserved Worker Populations, Occupational Surveillance, and Occupational and Environmental Epidemiology. Overall, more than 2,000 professionals are served each year through continuing education and outreach programs.

Jordan Hepler (MS ’13), Visiting Project Coordinator of Illinois ERC, began his involvement with the center in 2011 as a student. As a trainee, he participated in Illinois ERC’s core interdisciplinary activities, which equip students with practical experience, including process tours of local industry, participating in one of three targeted research teams, and attending a weekly interdisciplinary seminar. “What interests me in the Occupational Health and Safety field is that you have the opportunity to directly benefit someone else’s life. Adults typically spend about a third of their adult lives working. Making improvements to a worker’s environment can have ripple effects that, in return, create a better and happier community,” Hepler says.

The Illinois ERC successfully competed for an additional five years of funding (July 2014-June 2019) from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “Workplace hazards can be devastating, so prevention of such occurrences can have a significant impact on people’s lives.”

For more information about Illinois ERC, visit uic.edu/sph/erc/.

Advocate for Worker Justice: Lorraine M. Conroy, ScD, CIH

On March 5, 2014, Lorraine M. Conroy, Senior Associate Dean for the UIC School of Public Health and director of Illinois ERC, spoke at a rally outside City Hall to support the call for universal paid sick leave. She joined public health and women’s advocates, business leaders, and Chicago Aldermen to speak up about how paid sick leave can lead to overall health improvements and significant savings for the health system. Research shows that 42% of the Chicago workforce lack access to paid sick leave. Conroy spoke specifically about how the lack of paid sick leave affects not only the workers who are sick, but also co-workers and the public.

“There are compelling public health and economic reasons to provide universal paid sick leave,” Conroy said. She provided a specific example of workplace-acquired influenza. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that people with influenza stay home for 24 hours after their fever has resolved in order to prevent the spread of influenza. However, workers without paid sick leave are more likely to come to work sick because they can’t afford to not work. Thus, increasing workplace transmission, contributing to loss in productivity.
Division of Health Policy and Administration

Dr. Lindsey Leininger, Assistant Professor and Research Assistant Professor of Health Policy and Administration, is a health policy and health services researcher who pursues work on the health care safety net for low-income populations. The majority of her published work regards the insurance coverage and access to health care of Medicaid-eligible populations. She currently serves as the Principal Investigator of an evaluation of a patient-centered medical homes initiative for high-risk women in the Wisconsin Medicaid program. She is also a member of the UIC-based team led by Dr. Beth Calhoun that is training the Affordable Care Act insurance enrollment assisters in Illinois.

Dr. Leininger has a longstanding interest in the design, implementation, and evaluation of state health care policies promoting health improvements among vulnerable populations. A key theme of her current research is exploring clinical prediction tools facilitating the effective targeting of intensive care management interventions among new and returning Medicaid enrollees. She has evaluated the predictive capacity of a self-reported health screener embedded in the Wisconsin Medicaid application for low-income adults, finding that the screener is effective in identifying likely high users of the emergency room and likely high-cost members. Subsequent work has established a predictive standard for future Medicaid-specific self-reported health screeners, creating a statistical tool that Medicaid stakeholders can use to identify the right populations for the right care delivery innovations. Ultimately, the guiding force behind this line of work is a desire to help Medicaid agencies improve population health outcomes in the most cost-effective manner possible.

Division of Epidemiology and Biostatistics

Dr. Kristin Rankin, Assistant Professor of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, has been funded by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau of the Health Resources and Services Administration to study the factors associated with the receipt, timing, and location of the recommended postpartum visit. The study will also address factors associated with the provision of effective contraception, specifically long-acting reversible contraception such as intrauterine devices and implants, in the postpartum period. Medicaid claims data from Illinois will be used to capture low-income women’s utilization patterns within the four months following a livebirth or stillbirth and discover whether women currently receive postpartum care and contraception in venues other than the traditional postpartum visit.

Dr. Rankin’s partners in these efforts include Dr. Arden Handler, Dr. Rachel Coley in Pediatrics/Obstetrics/Gynecology and Dr. Sadia Hasider in Obstetrics and Gynecology at the UIC College of Medicine, as well as Dr. Sally Freels in the Division of Epidemiology and Biostatistics and colleagues at the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services.

Dr. Rankin is also a co-investigator for a complementary study funded by the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services to assess the preferences of low-income postpartum women of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds with respect to the timing and location of the postpartum visit and the receipt of postpartum contraception and associated barriers. In addition, prenatal care providers will be interviewed to assess their current practices and perspectives about alternative approaches to delivering contraceptive services in the postpartum period. Finally, the team will test the feasibility and acceptability of training pediatricians to initiate a conversation about postpartum contraception with mothers at their infants’ well-child visits.

Together with the Medicaid Claims analysis, the findings of this study will support the development, implementation and evaluation of future interventions and policies to improve access to postpartum care and contraceptive services.

Division of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences

Dr. Lee Friedman, Assistant Professor of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences, is a community and occupational injury researcher. The research in which he participates spans the breadth of injury research from the most fundamental level related to the body’s response to injury to large policy issues regarding public safety. All the while, keeping in mind the goal of prevention at every step. At the basic level, the body responds to injury through a cascade of physiological changes which vary by individual and time following the initial traumatic event. His current work is exploring fundamental questions about postpartum contraception with behavioral interventions aimed at managing behavioral risks and life stressors and improving overall health and well-being among HIV-positive women who hold tremendous promise for reducing health disparities.

Dr. Faith Fletcher, Assistant Professor of Community Health Sciences and Health Services, Policies, and Interventions, has not been optimized for people living with HIV/AIDS. Thus, effective and culturally tailored behavioral interventions aimed at managing behavioral risks and life stressors and improving overall health and well-being among HIV-positive women hold tremendous promise for reducing health disparities.

Dr. Fletcher brings a unique perspective to health disparities research through her interdisciplinary academic training in bioethics, public health, and behavioral science. Most recently, Dr. Fletcher completed a Postdoctoral Fellowship in the Department of Behavioral Science at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. Her National Cancer Institute R25-funded study used combined qualitative and quantitative methods to explore barriers associated with suboptimal cervical cancer screening utilization among HIV-positive women at an urban, comprehensive HIV clinic in Houston, Texas. Dr. Fletcher is a recent recipient of the Kaiser Permanente BURCH Minority Leadership Award Program which aims to enhance the voices and leadership development of minority researchers committed to improving health outcomes for the underserved and reducing health and healthcare inequalities. She is also a Building Interdisciplinary Careers in Women’s Health Associate and an Institute for Research on Race and Public Policy Faculty Fellow at UIC.

Most notably, Dr. Fletcher recently accepted a position with the HIV Prevention Research Ethics Training Institute (RTEI) at Fordham University. This training fellowship will allow her to join a group of early-career professionals in pioneering innovative ways to examine HIV and drug abuse research ethics. Her RTEI project will generate empirical data to inform ethical practice and policies for HIV prevention science. Dr. Fletcher ultimately seeks to build a programmatic line of research that would engage innovative approaches to expand the precision of cancer preventive services in HIV clinic-based settings. Her UIC collaborators’ mentors include Dr. Geri Donenberg, Dr. Robin Mermelstein, Dr. Jesu Ramirez-Valles, Dr. Pauline Maki, and Dr. Alicia Matthews.
DO MEDIA INFLUENCE HEALTH BEHAVIORS? IF SO, HOW?

Since 2001, these two questions have preoccupied Dr. Sherry Emery, a senior scientist at the Institute for Health Research and Policy. In her early work, as part of a UIC-based team led by visiting Australian cancer researcher Melanie Wakefield, Dr. Emery looked for effects of anti-smoking commercials. In 2004, the team established a link between exposure to such commercials and lower smoking prevalence for American youth. A few years later, Dr. Emery led the team in confirming the link between anti-smoking ads and lower smoking prevalence for adults as well. In 2012, they reported some of those anti-smoking commercials are more effective than others. The ads sponsored by Big Pharma or Big Tobacco? They don’t inspire people to quit.

Sometime in 2008 or so, as she was watching a TV show on her computer, it dawned on Dr. Emery that if the research team continued to focus on TV advertising alone, they would miss a new and growing influence—the Web. People encounter health information on the Internet, intentionally and unintentionally. They find it on the pages they seek and in ads promoted in search results. Their friends and families post health info and share pages on Facebook, send them links to YouTube videos, and tweet about tweets about smoking, tens of thousands of smoking-related videos, and surveyed over 17,000 people online regarding their media consumption patterns, as well as the status of their tobacco use, and their attitudes and beliefs toward tobacco. New funding will allow them to study social media consumption—health attitudes, beliefs and behaviors—and smoking in particular. And we need to do this within the precepts of good science.

To learn about the influence of the new mediascape on tobacco use, Dr. Emery and her team have collected nearly 300 million tweets about smoking, tens of thousands of smoking-related YouTube videos, and surveyed over 17,000 people online regarding their media consumption patterns, as well as the status of their tobacco use, and their attitudes and beliefs toward tobacco. New funding will allow them to study social media consumption—health attitudes, beliefs and behaviors—and smoking in particular. And we need to do this within the precepts of good science. “For us, the key has become to measure health-related media consumption—not just message exposure, but also information searching and sharing,” Dr. Emery says. “Then we must strive to understand the relationships between exposure, searching and sharing health-related information. Finally, we need to explore the relationship between health media consumption patterns and health behaviors—and smoking in particular. And we need to do all this within the precepts of good science.”

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To learn more about Dr. Emery’s work, visit www.healthmediacollaboratory.org

Dr. Emery’s research includes analyzing the public’s response of anti-tobacco ads, like this one from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, on social media.

“We need to explore the relationship between health media consumption patterns and health behaviors—and smoking in particular. And we need to do all this within the precepts of good science.”

Dr. Emery’s research includes analyzing the public’s response of anti-tobacco ads, like this one from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, on social media.
to work in this field,’ recalls Smith, who thinking ‘healthcare is cool and I want health. ‘

develop into a specific interest in public

in the health professions. It was here that Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans,

minority students, specifically African

and graduate underrepresented racial/ethnic

and community based organizations in

shares. The two have stayed in contact over

the years and both received awards for their

achievements in the field of public health in

April 2014 at the school’s annual alumni

reunion.

Today, Mr. Smith serves as the

Community Relations Director for the

Center for Community Health and Vitality,

a component of the University of Chicago

Medicine’s Urban Health Initiative. “I provide technical assistance to University

of Chicago entities in effectively engaging

“After doing some thinking and being aware of my own mortality, I realized that I would like to leave something behind that could benefit others.”

desire to know why and to do something

about it lead him to pursue a graduate

degree in public health.

Mr. Smith recalls how the faculty

members at UIC were welcoming and

passionate about educating students about

public health. “They were willing to take the

extra step to provide advice and mentoring

to ensure students would be effective and

productive members of the public health

workforce,” he says. Dr. Shafiedd Amuwu,

who recently retired as the Associate Dean

for Urban Health and Diversity Programs,

was the first faculty member that Mr. Smith

met during his fact finding experience about

the school and its educational programs.

“He served as my graduate advisor and
today is still my public health mentor,” Smith 

speaks of Mr. Smith. “He helped me get

acquainted with the people, curriculum,

and course work at UIC,” Smith shares. “He also introduced me to faculty and

colleagues that I would later work with and

continue to have a relationship with.”

Smith adds that Mr. Smith continues to

support his career endeavors.

“After graduation, I applied for a job

with the Center for Community Health and Vitality. Mr. Smith’s recommendation

was the deciding factor for me,” Smith

shares. “His endorsement and his letter

of recommendation to the hiring committee

helped me land a position.”

Mr. Smith shares that he

appreciates the University and its educational programs.

“UIC offers many opportunities that

are not found anywhere else. The

school and its educational programs.

are of a high quality and are comparable

to any other public school of health

in the country,” Smith notes.

Mr. Smith currently

serves as the

Community Relations Director for the

Center for Community Health and Vitality.

Beyond this, he is a frequent speaker

at the university, the University of Chicago

Health System, and other communities

within the Chicagoland area. Overall, Mr. Smith

regards his time at UIC as a formative experience

and a stepping stone to his future endeavors.

Mr. Smith acknowledges the

University of Chicago entities in effectively engaging

minority students so that they, too, can

pursue a degree in public health.

George Smith, Jr. (center) receives the Minority Health in the Midwest Public Health Advocacy Award. Joining him are Craig Hyland, Assistant Dean for Advancement; alumni board member, Tiana

Kiss (MPH ’04); Selena Smith, former UHDP staff

member; Jamila Rashad (MPH ’90), Director of

UIC’s Urban Health Programs; Damon T. Arnold

(MPH ’92); and Ebbie Dolen, Assistant Dean for

Urban Health and Diversity Programs.

For more information about including

the UIC School of Public Health

in your estate plans, please contact

Craig Hyland, Assistant Dean for

Advancement, at 312-355-4501.

Annual Support and Generous Gift from Alumnus Will Help Eliminate Health Disparities

ELIMINATING HEALTH DISPARITIES IS MORE THAN A JOB FOR GEORGE SMITH, JR. (MPH ’96); IT’S A PASSION THAT BEGAN MORE THAN 25 YEARS AGO. AS A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT, MR. SMITH BECAME INVOLVED IN THE EARLY OUTREACH EFFORTS OF UIC’S URBAN HEALTH AND DIVERSITY PROGRAM, WHOSE MISSION IS TO RECRUIT, RETAIN, AND GRADUATE UNDERREPRESENTED RACIAL/ETHNIC MINORITY STUDENTS, SPECIFICALLY AFRICAN AMERICANS, LATINOS, AND NATIVE AMERICANS, IN THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS. IT WAS HERE THAT MR. SMITH DEVELOPED A SPECIFIC INTEREST IN PUBLIC HEALTH. IT WAS HERE THAT AMERICANS, LATINOS, AND NATIVE AMERICANS, MINORITY STUDENTS, SPECIFICALLY AFRICAN AMERICANS AND GRADUATE UNDERREPRESENTED RACIAL/ETHNIC MINORITY STUDENTS, SPECIFICALLY AFRICAN AMERICANS, LATINOS, AND NATIVE AMERICANS, IN THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS. IT WAS HERE THAT MR. SMITH DEVELOPED A SPECIFIC INTEREST IN PUBLIC HEALTH.

Mr. Smith shares that he appreciates the University and its educational programs. “UIC offers many opportunities that are not found anywhere else. The school and its educational programs are of a high quality and are comparable to any other public school of health in the country,” Smith notes. Mr. Smith currently serves as the Community Relations Director for the Center for Community Health and Vitality. Beyond this, he is a frequent speaker at the university, the University of Chicago Health System, and other communities within the Chicagoland area. Overall, Mr. Smith regards his time at UIC as a formative experience and a stepping stone to his future endeavors.

Mr. Smith acknowledges the University of Chicago entities in effectively engaging minority students so that they, too, can pursue a degree in public health.

George Smith, Jr. (center) receives the Minority Health in the Midwest Public Health Advocacy Award. Joining him are Craig Hyland, Assistant Dean for Advancement; alumni board member, Tiana Kiss (MPH ’04); Selena Smith, former UHDP staff member; Jamila Rashad (MPH ’90), Director of UIC’s Urban Health Programs; Damon T. Arnold (MPH ’92); and Ebbie Dolen, Assistant Dean for Urban Health and Diversity Programs.
Climate change is a hot topic and one that both organizations devote resources to addressing. Together they are working on a climate and health adaptation plan, which is a set of deliberate and specific efforts to anticipate and prepare for the effects of climate change. The purpose of this plan is to both improve the resilience of public health systems to stresses of climate change and to reduce the burden of climate-related adverse health impacts.

"Our new agreement demonstrates a strong commitment on the part of IDPH to collaborate with not only our faculty, but with our students through internships and practicum opportunities."

To improve coordination and maximize resources toward health improvement for all of our partnership efforts, UIC SPH and IDPH have established an on-going intergovernmental agreement (IGA) to align their respective strategic plan objectives and meet a common health agenda for Illinois. The IGA, in place since the fall of 2012, explores ways to systematically and strategically integrate and leverage the work of both organizations. Our new agreement demonstrates a strong commitment on the part of IDPH to collaborate with not only our faculty, but with our students through internships and practicum opportunities," says Dean Paul Brandt-Rauf. "We are very grateful to have such a strong community partner in IDPH."

Dr. LaMar Hasbrouck, Director of the Illinois Department of Public Health, Dr. Tom Frieden, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Dean Paul Brandt-Rauf and Dr. Bechara Choucair, Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Public Health, attended a community conversation hosted at UIC SPH on May 8, 2014 about CDC initiatives and advances in public health.

continuing partnership with the UIC School of Public Health," said Illinois Department of Public Health Director LaMar Hasbrouck, who also serves as a Clinical Associate professor in the school's Community Health Sciences division.

Both IDPH and the UIC SPH are committed to expanding and cultivating strategic public and private partnerships to advance Illinois' health agenda. A coordinated response to community health issues will afford both organizations the opportunities to "address a variety of public health needs, and they are critical to helping (us) achieve (our) vision of helping communities throughout the state achieve and maintain optimal health," furthers Dr. Hasbrouck.

The UIC Mid-America Public Health Training Center (AMPHTC) is located at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), School of Public Health, 800 S. Paulina St. Chicago, IL 60612. The Center’s mission is to enhance the capacity of mid-American public health professionals to improve the health of the region’s people through education, research and service.
Celebrating the Achievements of Students, Alumni, Faculty and Staff (...continued)

- Cancer Treatment Centers of America (CTCA) has announced the appointment of Giuseppe Del Priore, MD, (MPH ’93) as the National Director of Gynecologic Oncology.
- Edwin Detson, PhD joined UIC SFH as Assistant Dean for Urban Health and Diversity Programs and was appointed as Assistant Professor on the tenure track in the Division of Community Health Sciences. He will provide executive leadership to the development and management of the programs and activities of the UHDF office, which is charged with recruiting, retaining, and graduating underrepresented racial/ethnic minority students in public health professions, and expanding academic enrichment opportunities for these students.
- Ashley Dyer (MPH ’11) went on a public health advocacy trip to Indonesia with Save the Children, where she met with public health advocates.
- Howard Ehrman, MD, (MPH ’91) is the new Chief Medical Officer of the Will County Community Health Center, which is one of 8 Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) in Illinois that is also part of the new Chief Medical Officer of the Will County Community Health Center, which has been named one of Chicago Defender’s 2014 Men of Excellence.
- David Henry, Professor of Health Policy and Administration and researcher at the Institute of Health Research and Policy, received the 2013 Community, Culture and Prevention Science Award from the Society for Prevention Research for his work with Alaska Native communities.
- Andrew A. Gonzalez, MD, JD, (MPH ’10) had his article, Understanding the Volume-Outcome Effect in Cardiovascular Surgery, featured in JAMA Surgery.

- Christine Garcia, MD, (MPH ’05) was nominated for the Medea Right Fit Resident H.E.R.O. award. This award honors residents in practice that go above and beyond.
- Jack Herrmann, DVM, (MPH ’03), DACT, Director of the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine/Master of Public Health (DVM/MPH) program and the Center for One Health Illinois, received the 2014 AAVMC Senator John Melcher Fellowship Award.

- David Hinkamp, Adjunct Clinical Assistant Professor of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences, was awarded the award of Excellence in Teaching from the University of Illinois at Chicago.
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- Susan Hughes, Professor of Community Health Sciences, has been awarded a Fulbright grant to adapt Fit and Strong!, the evidence-based exercise program she developed for older adults with arthritis, for use in Portugal.

- Bill Kling, Clinical Assistant Professor in Health Policy and Administration, moderated a panel at a workshop called Health on the Go: Medical Apps, Privacy & Liability. He worked with Sarah Bliemer, JD, (MPH ’10), Director of the Center for Diabetes Research and Policy at Chicago-Kent College of Law, and HPA candidate Nadia Danshvar, Research Assistant at the IIT Chicago-Kent Center for Diabetes Research and Policy. Ben Gerber, MD, (MPH ’05) was a speaker on this panel.

- Jiehong Guo, PhD candidate in Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences, received a fellowship awarded by the Institute for Environmental Science and Policy (IFSP).

- Laila Hashbrouck, MD, Clinical Associate Professor in Community Health Sciences, has been named one of Chicago Defender’s 2014 Men of Excellence.

- Janet Lin, MD, (MPH ’94) received the Award for Excellence in Teaching from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

- MPH candidate in Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences, Nang Lin, was selected as a recipient of the Chicago Consular Corps Scholarship for the academic year 2013–2014.

- Suzet McKinney (DrPH ’09) received the 2013 Kathy Osterman Award for Excellence in Leadership, which was given by Mayor Rahm Emanuel and the City of Chicago.

- Cammeo Medici (MPH ’13) is the recipient of the 2014 William E. Winter Award for Outstanding Advocate Leadership, which is given by the University of Illinois Foundation.

- Stephen Trzeciak, MD, (MPH ’06) was recently named Head of Critical Care Medicine and Director of the Center for Critical Care Services at Cooper University Hospital, Cooper Medical School of Rowan University, Camden, New Jersey.

- Amy Rosenfeld (MPH ’13) was recently hired on as a Survey Research Specialist II at NORC at the University of Chicago.

- Margie Schaps (MPH ’78) was honored by PCC Community Wellness Center for her dedication to passing legislation in Illinois allowing birth centers to open.

- Julio Silva, MD, (MPH ’06), who is the Vice President of Clinical Systems and Chief Medical Information Officer at Rush University Medical Center, has been named Chief of Health Informatics at the Sidra Medical and Research Center for women and children now under construction in Doha, Qatar.

- Shiva Singhal, MD, (MPH ‘08) recently joined the Mark Twain Cancer Center in San Andreas, California. She is a board certified Oncologist and brings experience in specialty care as a Hospitalist and Internal Medicine Physician.

*Tell us what you’re up to! Email your news to livsph@uic.edu.*
MORE THAN 230 GRADUATES WERE HONORED at the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health commencement ceremony on May 8, 2014. This marked the first class of undergraduates that earned a Bachelor of Arts in Public Health. Attendees were honored to have Joy Reid, host of MSNBC’s “The Reid Report,” as its speaker. “She has been such a highly visible force and consistent voice for social justice issues in Chicago and beyond, including those related to the health of the public,” said Paul Brandt-Rauf.

“We asked Ms. Reid to serve as this year’s commencement speaker because her commentaries and her journalism are fact and evidence-based and grounded in social justice,” explains Richard Sowell, Associate Dean for Community and Public Health Practice. “Our students care very much about the issues Ms. Reid talks about, including politics, health equity, and marginalized populations, so I know they appreciated what she had to say in her remarks.”

An important part of the commencement ceremony is the presentation of two awards, both named in honor of UIC SPH founders. The Bernard H. Baum Golden Apple Award was awarded to Jennifer Hebert-Beirne, Assistant Professor in Community Health Sciences. Professor Hebert-Beirne was selected for this prestigious award due to her compelling style of teaching and service to students. Students said they nominated her because of her commitment to the communities in which she works. This is the third time in four years that Professor Hebert-Beirne has received this award.

The Alan W. Donaldson Memorial Award, named for UIC SPH’s first Associate Dean, was given to Rachel Reichlin, who earned joint degrees of a Master of Public Health in the division of Community Health Sciences and a Master of Science in Community Public Health Nursing. Ms. Reichlin was selected because of her distinguished leadership, commitment to social justice, and significant contributions improving the public’s health. As an acute care nurse and as a research assistant at UIC SPH, she balanced her academic studies with her professional work and volunteer responsibilities. In her address, Ms. Reichlin encouraged her new public health colleagues to be innovators for social change, saying “we can achieve greatness when we work together!”

The ceremony concluded with graduates being encouraged to stay connected with their alma mater. Dr. Stephen Thompson (PhD ’00), President of the UIC SPH alumni board, spoke to the Class of 2014 about ways to stay involved. “Many of you received a scholarship during your time at UIC or benefitted from an internship our alumni provided,” Thompson said. He urged the graduates to get involved, even during their very first year as alumni, by hosting a student intern at their place of employment, referring a future student to UIC SPH, or giving back by volunteering or donating to the school. 

“A public health education gives you the option to change other people’s lives!” —Joy Reid

Joy Reid, host of MSNBC’s “The Reid Report”, delivered the commencement address.

Dr. Jennifer Hebert-Beirne receives the Bernard H. Baum Golden Apple Award from Koffitse Atchon, President of the Public Health Student Association.

The Alan W. Donaldson Memorial Award recipient, Rachel Reichlin

Members of the inaugural class of undergraduate students who earned their Bachelor of Arts in Public Health.
Alumnus Receives Prestigious UIF Award

ON FRIDAY, APRIL 4, 2014, THE UNIVERSITY of Illinois at Chicago and the University of Illinois Foundation (UIF) co-hosted their annual alumni reception and dinner to honor alumni and friends whose support and advocacy has had a meaningful impact on the campus. The event, called An Evening With Legacies and Leaders, was truly a unique gathering and recognized many significant contributions to UIC.

UIC School of Public Health alumnus, Dr. Stephen Thompson (PhD ’00), received the prestigious 2014 William E. Winter Award for Outstanding Advocate Leadership. This award, named for William E. Winter (’42 UIUC), Retired Chairman of the 7-Up Company, honors the volunteer of extraodinary leadership. This award, named for William E. Winter (’42 UIUC), Retired Chairman of the 7-Up Company, honors the volunteer who has shown extraordinary leadership in building meaningful connections between the school, alumni and external entities. Under Dr. Thompson’s leadership, the board reached 100% giving for the first time in the school’s history.

Dr. Thompson inspires the next generation to give back. In each of his commencement speeches, he has stressed the importance of all alumni, even the most recent graduates, to give back to the university. At the school’s 40th anniversary gala celebration in April 2013, he delivered a very powerful speech to his fellow alumni. “I encourage all alumni of this school to give back, whether it be time, talent, or treasure. I can speak from personal experience that the work of this alumni, at this school, at this university, is one of the most rewarding and meaningful endeavors I’ve ever undertaken. I urge all of the alumni here tonight to get involved in whatever way you can. You’ll never work with a finer group of people.”

According to Craig Hyland, the school’s Assistant Dean for Advancement, “Steve’s leadership is starting to inspire the next generation of alumni donors.” The school’s new Recent Graduate Council has asked to participate in the fundraising of the school. “This would not have happened if not for Steve,” says Hyland.

Left: Awarded Dr. Stephen Thompson (center) is joined by Dean Paul Brandt-Rauf, his wife, Karen Thompson, UIF President, Tom Farrell, and Assistant Dean for Advancement, Craig Hyland.

Below: Dr. Thompson receives the 2014 William E. Winter Award for Outstanding Advocate Leadership from University of Illinois President Robert Easter.

Student presenters Ryan Cole and Ainaa Chima-Okeke joined Dean Brandt-Rauf in presenting the divisional awards to Lee Francis, Tracie Smith, Robert Brewer III and Barbara Epstein.

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In Dr. Baum’s absence, Dr. Thompson felt the need to reconnect with the school for the first time in eight years since his graduation. In that short period of time, he began to build a legacy that will undoubtedly impact the School of Public Health and UIC for decades to come.

Shortly after reconnecting with the school, Dr. Thompson was invited to join its Alumni Board. He immediately became a first time donor to the school and, the next fall, he took over as Vice President. When a few months later the President of the board resigned, Dr. Thompson gladly accepted the responsibility of leading the board. He inherited a board that did not have a focus on resource development and he quickly set out to develop new roles and responsibilities that put a strong emphasis on fundraising, idea generation and building meaningful connections between the school, alumni and external entities. Under Dr. Thompson’s leadership, the school, alumni and external entities.

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Valerie Webb accepts the Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award from Dean Brandt-Rauf and alumni board member Sheri Cohen (MPH ‘91).

Alumni and friends enjoy the dinner at Galleria Marchetti.


Healthy Spirits

Alumni and friends at Elephant & Castle on February 12, 2014.

Alumni Reception in New York

Alumni board members, Cynthia Summers (DPH ’04) and Abby Long (MPH ’03), hosted an event for New York area alumni on May 13, 2014.

Engage: 2014 Events

August 22, 2014
5 pm – 6:30 pm
Alumni Reception at New Student Orientation
UIC School of Public Health
1603 W. Taylor Street
Chicago, IL 60612

September 18, 2014
5:30 pm – 6 pm
Healthy Spirits

September 23, 2014
6 pm – 8 pm
Founders Circle Annual Reception

October 22, 2014
6 pm – 8 pm
Alumni Learning Series

November 17, 2014
APHA Alumni & Friends Reception
New Orleans

For more information on all of these events, visit publichealth.uic.edu/alumni.

American Public Health Association

Dean Paul Brandt-Rauf is joined by Miriam Link-Mullison, Director of Jackson County Health Department, Tom Hughes, Executive Director of the Illinois Public Health Association, and David Gill, Assistant Director of Illinois Department of Public Health at the reception held during the APHA conference in Boston on November 4, 2013.

Founders Circle

Founders Circle members attend a special reception on March 12, 2014. See page 15 for more information about joining the Founders Circle.

Alumni Learning Series

Captain Todd Slankewicz (MPH ’03), Tony Hermes (MPH ‘01), Dr. Lee Francis (MPH ’00) and Clarita Santos (MPH ’96) served as panelists that discussed the Affordable Care Act at the Alumni Learning Series on December 11, 2013.

Dr. Kira Christian (MPH ’01), center, served as the keynote speaker for the Alumni Learning Series on March 12, 2014. She is joined by the Director of the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine/Master of Public Health (DVMD/MPH) program, Dr. Jack Hermann (MPH ’03), and Jasmine James (MPH ’14).

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