

# Healthviews

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- ❖ Establishing First Academic Health Department in Illinois
- ❖ Turning Brownfields Into Greenfields
- ❖ Professor Named Researcher of the Year

**UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM  
RANKS 12TH IN THE NATION**



SCHOOL OF  
PUBLIC HEALTH



The School of Public Health is one of seven health sciences colleges at UIC providing a system-wide approach to healthcare.



**AT LEFT** Photo taken by Kendall Anderson, MPH, PhD candidate in Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences, in Mole National Park in Larabanda, Ghana. A Forest Ranger protecting some of Ghana's last remaining black elephants.

**COVER** Interim Dean Lorraine M. Conroy walks the halls of UIC SPH with students Jeffrey Grizzell and Queena Luu.

Healthviews

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The UIC School of Public Health is committed to preserving the environment. This publication is printed on post-consumer recycled paper using biodegradable ink.

DEAN'S DESK

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In February, I began serving as Interim Dean of the UIC School of Public Health. While I am new to this role, I have been with UIC SPH for many years. As a Professor of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences, I led the School's Occupational Health and Safety Education Research Center from 1999 – 2015 and served as Senior Associate Dean since 2012. A national search is underway to find our next permanent dean, which we hope to announce in the Fall. It has been a privilege to serve in this capacity during the School's transition and I'm fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with our students, faculty and alumni.



In this issue of *Healthviews*, I am pleased to share with you stories that will make you proud to be part of the UIC SPH community.

In 2012, our School launched a Bachelor of Arts in Public Health program. In less than 4 years, the program has gained recognition and was recently ranked 12th in the nation. The program's curriculum includes action learning and students are expected to be active agents in their learning. A recent alumnus of the program shared with us that the program provided him "with the knowledge and skill set to operate among diverse groups and populations within our society." You can read about the impact this program is having on students on pages 3-5.



Another proud achievement of UIC SPH that occurred over the past year is the establishment of the first academic health department in the state of Illinois. On pages 6-7 you'll learn about how our School made history when we signed an agreement with the Chicago Department of Public Health to strengthen the links between public health practice and academia. Such an important partnership will lessen the separation between the education of public health professionals and the practice of public health.

I'm very proud that UIC SPH consistently ranks among the top 20 schools and programs of public health receiving research funding from the National Institutes of Health. Groundbreaking research by Jyotsna Jagai on the effects of pollution on cancer, and Jamie Chriqui, recently named one of UIC's Researcher of the Year, are just two of our faculty who are profiled in our research section on pages 8-11.

Lastly, I hope you'll see photos from the many events that took place during the year (pages 22-25) and be inspired to join us at one our future alumni events planned for the upcoming year.

Wishing you good health,

Lorraine M. Conroy

Lorraine M. Conroy, ScD, CIH  
Interim Dean, UIC School of Public Health



## What advice would you give our graduates entering the field of public health in today's environment?

Members of the UIC SPH community weigh in....



New graduates should have a good understanding of the community and culture that they will be serving. Having a strong understanding of the needs and priorities of a community will help them understand how best to serve people and encourage prevention. At all levels of public health, we see that prevention is the key to addressing health issues/ disparities. In challenging times for health care support we need to focus more on prevention.

**KATHRYN E. ROACH, PT, PHD '91**  
PROFESSOR AND VICE CHAIR  
FOR RESEARCH, DEPARTMENT OF  
PHYSICAL THERAPY  
UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI, MILLER  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE



In this chaotic and uncertain political and financial climate, it's important to be flexible when looking at potential career opportunities. Take a broad view of public health and be creative in finding a niche for yourself. Emphasize the breadth of your knowledge and your agility in public health settings. Stay true to the public health values we hold dear, which are being challenged daily!

**JOY GETZENBERG, MA, MPH**  
ASSISTANT CLINICAL PROFESSOR  
HEALTH POLICY AND  
ADMINISTRATION



I would encourage our graduates to remember the mission and values that formed the foundation of the public health education they earned at UIC when out in the field. Given the challenges we expect to face in the future, it is my hope that our students will rely on these principles and remain encouraged and steadfast in doing the important work they have chosen because our communities are depending on them.

**BRENIKKI FLOYD, PHD, MPH**  
VISITING CLINICAL ASSISTANT  
PROFESSOR  
COMMUNITY HEALTH SCIENCES



Everyone in the healthcare workforce, and public health professionals in particular, must always think outside the box and consider just how many variables can potentially affect health outcomes. Beyond all the knowledge gained through coursework and practicum experience, I would urge all graduates to view public health as a state of mind which requires and demands us to see the intersections of the physical, mental, social and environmental factors that surround us everyday.

**AHMED CHAUDHRY, MPH '13**  
HIV PREVENTION COORDINATOR  
PUERTO RICAN CULTURAL  
CENTER - VIDA/SIDA



I would advise graduates to become involved in professional organizations that are in line with their professional and/or career development goals. Attend conferences, meetings and even volunteer to serve on a committee. Attending conferences provides an opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with other public health professionals and leaders with different backgrounds and experiences. Increasing professional knowledge and networking can provide many new and exciting opportunities.

**SAUNDRA SPILOTRO, MPH '76**



Approach public health with an open mind and a questioning attitude. Public health problems are iterative and often originate from unexpected sources. Address your career in public health with the same flexibility as you would approach a public health problem.

**REGINALD CANTAVE, MHA '07, FACHE**  
PHO DIRECTOR  
ADVOCATE PHYSICIAN PARTNERS

## Soaring to New Heights: New Undergraduate Program Ranked 12th in the Nation

Since its inception in 2012, the Bachelor of Arts in Public Health (BA) program at the UIC School of Public Health has allowed a new generation of students to think critically about health. Students in the program, like Faruq Olamiji Sarumi (BA '17), who served on the school's Undergraduate Student Advisory Board, report gaining a broader perspective in their approach to health through hands-on experiences within Chicago's diverse communities. Many students even note that their new understandings benefit their own lives as well. "The program has impacted my life on a personal level by granting me the opportunity to reflect on my own value system and decisions," said Mr. Sarumi. "My broader sense of thinking, thanks to the program, has enhanced my personal relationships with others. It has provided me with the knowledge and skill set to operate among diverse groups and populations within our society."



"The program has impacted my life on a personal level by granting me the opportunity to reflect on my own value system and decisions."

Right: Faruq Olamiji Sarumi (BA '17)

Karin J. Opacich, PhD, MHPE,  
OTR/L, FAOTA, Assistant  
Dean for Undergraduate  
Programs and Clinical  
Associate Professor of

Health Policy & Administration, led the development of the BA program and is thrilled by its recent ranking as 12th in the U.S. by College Choice, a company which specializes in college and university rankings and resources.

Dr. Opacich was asked to help create the baccalaureate program in public health when the school's former Dean, Paul Brandt-Rauf, responded favorably to a consensus report from the Institute of Medicine (2003), which recognized the need for accessible public health education to yield an "educated citizenry" able to understand the many factors that shape the health of populations. That report stimulated a national surge

in new undergraduate public health programs. She was hired in 2009 and began working alongside Associate Professor Emerita, Dr. Sylvia Furner, to garner support and develop the baccalaureate degree in public health. While UIC SPH had been educating students at the master's and doctoral levels for nearly 40 years, this was the first time it embarked on educating students at the undergraduate level.

To begin the process of developing this new curriculum, an invitation was sent to faculty in public health with an interest in undergraduate education to "please come to the table," Dr. Opacich said. Once the curricular infrastructure started to emerge, input was solicited from colleges and departments across the University of Illinois at Chicago whose interests meshed with public health. Early in the process, the undergraduate degree development committee established that they did not want to create a "simplified version" of the school's master of public health (MPH) program. "We identified the philosophical foundation of what we wanted to be, which is grounded in liberal arts," Dr. Opacich explained.

The BA program is committed to the principles of liberal education and the educational philosophy includes "confluent education" incorporating the emotional, social, and cognitive understandings of its students. The curriculum entails "action learning," and students are expected to be active agents in the production of their own learning. During the two-year program of study, students are engaged in communities and are directly involved in an array of projects focusing on everything from revitalizing brownfields, to eye health in Chicago Public Schools, to issues surrounding homelessness, to occupational safety for at risk workers.

The program graduated its fourth class on May 5, 2017, adding another 40 individuals to its alumni total of 102. The program draws an array of students with amazingly diverse cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds. Some are first generation college students, while still others represent first generations of families in the United States. Most students have to work while attending college and have lived or still live in the communities where quality public health and access to healthcare is a concern.

According to Dr. Opacich, students in the program are even more diverse than the campus as a whole, which is considered one of the most diverse universities in the nation. "The beauty of the undergrad program .... when facing students, it is like facing the league of nations," Dr. Opacich said. "There is amazing diversity here. A good part of (the undergrad program) is learning to talk to each other, learning to appreciate different realities, learning to be culturally literate in how they interact with each other."

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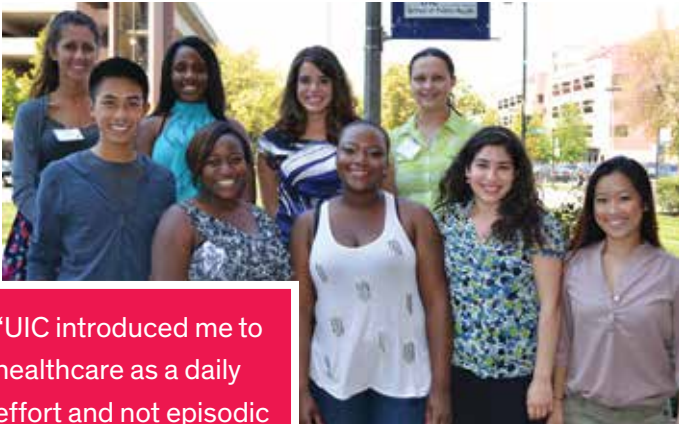


...continued from page 3

When students finish the program, they emerge with an informed understanding of public health and the role it plays in achieving health equity and social justice.

Students matriculate into the program in their junior year, after having earned 60 hours of general education credits, nine of which are in public health. They proceed through the major as a cohort in another 35 hours of core public health coursework. While not all graduates will pursue higher degrees or work in the public health field directly, all will have gained an education to better serve in their chosen fields. “The point of this program is to produce an educated citizenry,” Dr. Opacich said, describing students of public health as health “crusaders” and people “with a heart for social justice.”

For some undergraduate students, the baccalaureate degree in public health will be an end point while, for others, it will provide the academic basis for the pursuit of a professional graduate



“UIC introduced me to healthcare as a daily effort and not episodic as it is approached in medicine.”

Top, Second from Left: Sharon Mwale (BA ‘14)

degree in public health, medicine, nursing, or other fields related to public health. Sharon Mwale (BA ‘14) was one of just nine students in the first graduating class. Once considering a career in medicine, she said the bachelor’s in public health courses taught her to look at life and her career more broadly. “UIC introduced me to healthcare as a daily effort and not episodic as it is approached in medicine,” said Ms. Mwale. “This mindset has impacted both my personal and professional life. Personally, I make more deliberate choices in my daily life regarding my physical and mental health. Professionally, I think the greatest lesson I learned was social determinants of health. This has greatly informed my thinking on the job on a daily basis and my understanding of how one’s background and environment may influence an individual’s trajectory.” Ms. Mwale went on to complete a master’s in public health at the Yale School of Public Health last spring. Today she works as a program manager for Health Venture in Connecticut.

Queena Luu (BA ‘17) said the program has “exposed” her to various interventions, initiatives, and projects present in Chicago’s many neighborhoods where she was raised. “It is one thing to be learning about theories, like the ecological model



Dr. Karin Opacich, left, and Queena Luu (BA ‘17), center

“It is one thing to be learning about theories... but (it is another thing) to be able to apply that knowledge to develop skills in the field,”

and the case studies, but (it is another thing)

to be able to apply that knowledge to develop skills in the field,” Ms. Luu said. “I’ve worked on a health curriculum project at West Humboldt Park, and I was able to draw from health communication strategy knowledge from my health literacy class. I’ve also worked on a museum exhibit project that deals with urban health during the summer.” Ms. Luu said she plans on earning a master’s degree in public health and becoming a physician in primary care.

Ada Tong (BA ‘16) was a pre-med/biology student before discovering public health. She appreciated the small class sizes and was motivated by her professors who were supportive of the passions and interest of each student. “UIC gave me the tools to explore more careers outside of the traditional health field,” Ms. Tong said. “Through my research internship with Dr. Julie Darnell, I gained first-hand knowledge of the progression and growth of free health care clinics across the United States. Public health is not confined to a clinical or administrative setting; it can be applied to all areas of life. I am inspired to use my public health knowledge to understand all external factors and root causes.”

Through the program Ms. Tong has developed strong, supportive friendships that also have benefitted her professionally. As a constituent services coordinator for Illinois 2nd District State Representative Theresa Mah, Ms. Tong said she

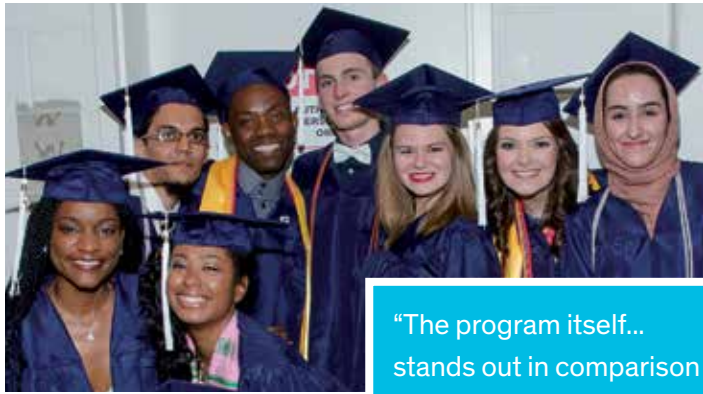


Ada Tong (BA ‘16)

“Public health is not confined to a clinical or administrative setting; it can be applied to all areas of life”

was planning a health fair and was excited she could reach out to a fellow student who worked at the American Diabetes Foundation who agreed to speak at the fair. “I firmly believe that although medicine is important, public health is at the frontline and prevention is key for healthy communities,” she said.

Tamah Kamlem (BA ‘15) grew up in the poor neighborhood of Douala in the country of Cameroon located in central Africa. Mr. Kamlem, the son and grandson of community health workers, graduated Suma Cum Laude with his bachelor’s in public health. He was the first recipient of The Promise Award, bestowed upon one student who is perceived by the faculty to show outstanding potential to contribute to the health of the public as exemplified by academic performance, community engagement, and leadership. He is currently living in Washington, D.C. where he interns at the World Bank Group. Growing up the way he did taught him early on “the importance of health in the lives of individuals and communities.”



Center: Tamah Kamlem (BA ‘15)

“The program itself... stands out in comparison to curricula at other universities.”

Mr. Kamlem, who has lived in Europe and the United States and speaks five languages fluently, said his interests reside in policy making in the area of health economics with a focus on the “burden of noncommunicable diseases and their economic impact.” He said Dr. Opacich and Melissa Tag, Associate Director of Undergraduate Operations, were major influences over his choice to pursue a degree in public health. He appreciates that both took a “genuine interest” in his academic development.

“The program itself, with its emphasis on the acquisition of critical thinking skills and the built-in field experiences, stands out in comparison to curricula at other universities,” Mr. Kamlem said. While at UIC, he was mentored by professors who “pushed” him to be successful in and outside the classroom. His studies and interactions led him to the Milken Institute School of Public Health at George Washington University to pursue an MPH in Global Health Policy.

“I still rely on lessons, advice, and insight gained as an undergraduate,” Mr. Kamlem said, adding that he currently works at John Snow Inc. on a USAID-funded project on health management information systems. “The goal is to improve child health indicators in 26 countries across three continents.”



Steven Chrzas (BA ‘16)

“I joke that public health is a lifestyle for me because it’s so pervasive in my daily life.”

Steven Chrzas (BA ‘16) is enrolled in UIC SPH’s master’s program in Health Policy & Administration. He said public health for him has become a way of life. “I joke that public health is a lifestyle for me because it’s so pervasive in my daily life. Not only do I have my public health lens influencing

my perspective daily, but I am constantly involved with events at the school and with classmates. There is always something going on at SPH, and there are a plethora of social groups and gatherings to be a part of. For example, my cohort in the MPH program tries to plan a dinner once a month which we’ve coined SPH Eats.”

Mr. Chrzas, who may pursue work in governmental public health, said it has been his interactions with the school’s “diverse” and “passionate” faculty members, as well as his fellow students, that have molded his “professional character.” He added the school also has been helpful in preparing him to be a strong competitor in the job market after graduation. But his passion for public health has been most influenced by Dr. Karen Peters. Dr. Peters taught the first pre-requisite course he took. At the time, he said, he was majoring in biological sciences but was unsure of his path. He said that course and Dr. Peters “got me completely hooked on the ideals and practice of public health. I remember thinking it was so cool that not only was Dr. Peters so knowledgeable on global health, but she was able to integrate her fieldwork into how she taught the course. Dr. Peter’s passion for her work really shone in that class, and this is something that I witnessed across the undergraduate program.”

Mr. Sarumi, who described himself as a student and a social activist, said the program experience has inspired him to pursue a master’s degree in public health in maternal and child health and global health. “The social conditions of a marginalized population within the city exemplifies the importance of public health intervention in fighting barriers of health equity,” said Mr. Sarumi, who hopes to earn a doctoral degree and work as a social activist addressing gender and racial issues. Among several ambitious plans for his future inspired in part by the UIC SPH undergraduate experience, he wants to be involved in work that empowers women of color. “UIC SPH taught me to advocate for health equity as an essential human right,” he said. ●

To view the rankings by College Choice, visit [www.collegechoice.net/rankings/public-health-degrees/](http://www.collegechoice.net/rankings/public-health-degrees/)



# UIC SPH Establishes First Academic Health Department in Illinois

By Katie McGrath

The UIC School of Public Health and the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) made history on January 25, 2017 when they signed an agreement establishing the first Academic Health Department (AHD) in Illinois. According to the Public Health Foundation, “AHD partnerships help to strengthen the links between public health practice and academia and to lessen the separation between the education of public health professionals and the practice of public health.”

Julie Morita, MD, Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Public Health, said “This partnership is critical and is in great alignment with the department of public health in the city of Chicago.”

AHD partnerships can enhance public health education and training, research, and service, and offer a variety of benefits, both for the organizations involved and for the community as a whole.

“UIC has a very clear mission of engaging with our community to improve health outcomes,” said Dr. Robert Barish, Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs at UIC. “As we seek new ways to serve our community, we are very excited to work with the Chicago Department of Public Health and believe that together we can make greater and faster strides on many of the pressing public health issues impacting our city.”

However, Griselle Torres (DrPH ‘14, MPH ‘06), Director of the Coordinating Center for Public Health Practice (CCPHP) at UIC SPH, doesn’t plan on stopping there. For Dr. Torres, “The goal in the end is to build a large, inclusive practice network with a shared decision-making model that is guided by a practice-based research agenda so locally, or as a state, we’re operating as one in regards to public health issues.”

**The primary purpose of the Center is to coordinate service, practice, and partnership activities while identifying opportunities to integrate service and practice into teaching and research activities through engaged partnerships.**



Richard Sewell, Associate Dean for Community and Public Health Practice, Lorraine M. Conroy, Interim Dean, Julie Morita, Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Public Health, and Griselle Torres, Director of the Coordinating Center for Public Health Practice

To that end, a partnership with the Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago has also been finalized, another with the Sinai Urban Health Institute is nearly complete, and talks have begun with Lake, Peoria and Cook County Health Departments, the Collaborative for Health Equity of Cook County, the Illinois Public Health Institute and the Illinois Department of Public Health, among others.

UIC SPH values all joint projects, but these 10-year partnerships are unique in that they are not project-based, making them truly collaborative. Partners will become external affiliates of UIC, meaning they will have access to university libraries, evidence-based research and more, which will provide important opportunities for internal workforce development.

In turn, UIC SPH will be able to leverage the expertise of public health practitioners as a way to bridge practice and academia. One way to do this is by taking a concept or theory in a course and using real health department data and cases to bring that concept to life. “It’s really about providing students an opportunity to learn beyond theory. In the real world, things don’t work as linearly as we’re taught,” explained Dr. Torres.

Another benefit of collaborating beyond a project is that SPH and its partners will be able to have more permanence in the community, particularly increasing the opportunities to co-apply for grants, which Dr. Torres believes can help close the translation gap that often occurs when implementing research in the community.



Julie Morita, Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Public Health, and Paul Brandt-Rauf, former Dean of the UIC School of Public Health, signed an agreement establishing the first Academic Health Department in Illinois on January 25, 2017.

The primary purpose of the Center is to coordinate service, practice, and partnership activities while identifying opportunities to integrate service and practice into teaching and research activities through engaged partnerships. This will create a system of coordination and communication between the practice and academic communities that maximizes their respective strengths and contributes to health improvement.

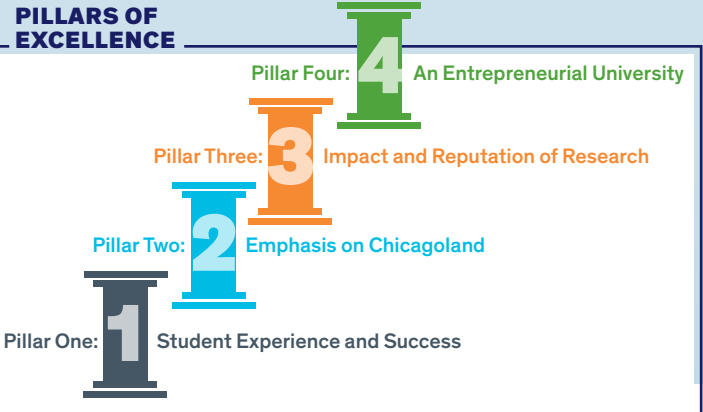
The Center has three long term goals. The first is to become a leader in public health practice-based research and in dissemination and translation of UIC faculty research about health and health systems. Secondly, the Center will become a leader in public health workforce development by developing a statewide workforce development training program aligned with the intergovernmental agreement the school has with the Illinois Department of Public Health. Lastly, the Center will be a leading provider and partner for innovative assessment, planning and evaluation services conducted with public health organizations, expanding current services to include emerging approaches such as health impact assessment and public health department accreditation support. With all the success of the Center in just over two years, of which the first AHD in Illinois is just the latest, there is no question that these goals will be met.

In the future, Dr. Torres imagines that the CCPHP will still operate as a catalyst for collaboration, but would also like for a direct relationship to occur between UIC SPH and the community. For now, she is focused on what the implementation process for AHD partnerships will look like.

“It’s overwhelming coming to UIC, so we’re starting the implementation process with an orientation to one another’s organization and how we want to deal with letters of support, co-applications of grants, curriculum development, and we’re working with administration to make sure those things happen,” Dr. Torres said.

Each partner will have its own implementation team that interfaces directly with SPH and vice versa. Dr. Torres is currently working with the SPH Steering Committee to figure out the best model for interfacing between external affiliates and UIC SPH. However, she believes that any model they decide upon must be adaptable. “It should be a dynamic model based on what’s going on in the community, at SPH and with our partners. Public health practice is not as clear cut as in certain areas of academia, so we want to be responsive as things change,” she said. Once the model is decided upon, both teams will come together and look at how implementation would work best. “The beauty is that I envision bringing them together because I think they’re going to learn from each other. That is paramount to collaboration, after all.” ●

PILLARS OF EXCELLENCE



INSPIRING INNOVATIVE DISCOVERY THROUGH RESEARCH

DIVISION OF  
EPIDEMIOLOGY AND  
BIostatISTICS

RESEARCHING HUMAN LONGEVITY

S. Jay Olshansky, an expert in aging and longevity, is Professor of Epidemiology and Biostatistics. He is known for having created the modern field of biodemography in 1992 – the biological basis for consistent and measurable age patterns of death observed in humans and other species. Initially trained as a demographer at the University of Chicago, Dr. Olshansky has since retrained in the fields of evolution biology, genetics, epidemiology, anthropology, and statistics.

Dr. Olshansky and his colleagues suggest that the current medical model, which is to attack age-related diseases independent of each other, will eventually lead to diminishing longevity gains. He further suggested that future mortality declines could lead to an extension of frailty and disability at the end of life in long-lived populations.

To ameliorate anticipated global health issues associated with life extension in the absence of health extension, Dr. Olshansky articulated in 2006 what has come to be known as the Longevity Dividend Initiative (LDI). The line of reasoning is straightforward – if the biological process of aging becomes the most important risk factor for what goes wrong with the human body as we live longer,

then the most prudent course of action is to attack the seeds of aging, rather than its disease consequences.

This line of reasoning first appeared in an article published by Dr. Olshansky and colleagues in 2006 in *The Scientist*; it was extended in an article published in 2008 in the *British Medical Journal*; it served as the basis for the formation of Google's Calico, Craig Venter's Longevity company, and the Geroscience initiative at the NIH; it was the basis for a new book published by Dr. Olshansky and colleagues entitled *Aging: The Longevity Dividend* (Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, 2015); and it was the foundation of the 2015 Ron Howard directed documentary on Aging Breakthroughs for National Geographic.

In the past year, Dr. Olshansky received the Irving S. Wright award from the American Federation for Aging Research; Donald P. Kent award from the Gerontological Society of America; the Alvar Svanborg memorial award from the University of Illinois at Chicago; and a 2016 Influencer in Aging by The Next Street.



DIVISION OF  
HEALTH POLICY AND  
ADMINISTRATION

EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF HEALTH INSURANCE

Anthony T. Lo Sasso is Professor of Health Policy and Administration and Director of the UIC Center for Employee Health Studies. Dr. Lo Sasso, who also serves as the Executive Director of the American Society of Health Economists, is an economist whose research spans several dimensions of health and labor economics, health policy, and health services and outcomes research. He is keenly interested in how government policies affect private sector decisions.

After receiving an Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) funded Independent Scientist Award entitled "Workplace Health Benefits and Employee Health," Dr. Lo Sasso explored the impact of the State Children's Health Insurance Program on insurance among children and the extent to which public coverage may have "crowded out" private coverage of children. This research received AcademyHealth's Article of the Year award in 2005. He has also examined how community rating provisions in state health insurance markets affect health insurance coverage, a topic of considerable importance given the prominence of pre-existing condition coverage in the Affordable Care Act.

An area of particular interest for Dr. Lo Sasso is the effects of health insurance benefit design on health care utilization and health outcomes. This work includes a National Institute of Mental Health funded study to examine the impact of an expansion of mental health benefits on cost and quality of care at a large manufacturing firm, ongoing work examining the effects of high deductible health insurance on health care use, and a recently completed NIH-funded study examining the effects of corporate wellness programs on use of preventive services and health outcomes.

Additionally, Dr. Lo Sasso serves as principal investigator on a grant from AHRQ to study "narrow network" health insurance plans. Health insurers are increasingly offering health plans with fewer in-network providers than in the very recent past. Given the new focus on narrow networks as a tool to reduce costs, it is imperative to understand how network design is affecting the provision of health care. For example, eliminating high cost providers from the network might generate substantial savings. Conversely, if access and quality are lower in narrow network plans, then any cost savings may prove illusory. Dr. Lo Sasso and his colleagues are presently examining the impact of narrow network plans on the dimensions of access, cost, and quality.

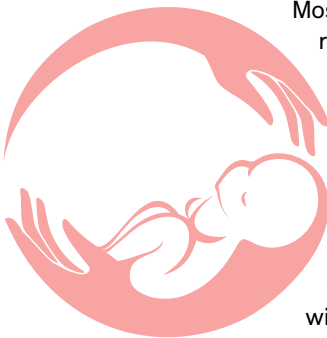
With training in labor and health economics and extensive experience studying the effects of insurance in both the private and public sectors, Dr. Lo Sasso is a nationally recognized leader in the field.



DIVISION OF  
COMMUNITY HEALTH  
SCIENCES

EXPLORING ADVERSE PREGNANCY OUTCOMES

Arden Handler is Professor of Community Health Sciences, Director of the Center of Excellence in Maternal and Child Health (MCH), and Co-Director of the MCH Epidemiology Program. Her research focuses on the exploration of factors that increase the risk of adverse pregnancy outcomes. Her work examines the ways in which the health care delivery system, particularly prenatal care, perinatal care, postpartum care, preconception/interconception care, and well-woman health care, can ameliorate these risks. Over the last three decades, Dr. Handler has conducted multiple research and evaluation projects across the reproductive and perinatal continuum.



Most recently, much of Dr. Handler's research has focused on women's health care when not pregnant. She has been working with Drs. Kristin Rankin, Rachel Caskey and Sadia Haider on a series of projects related to exploring barriers and facilitators to women's use of the postpartum visit and postpartum contraception with the aim of increasing access to and utilization of both. This team has recently completed a series of literature reviews focused on postpartum care and contraception, pilot tested the use of a

Reproductive Life Plan Tool at the pediatric Well-Baby Visit, and conducted key informant interviews with providers and women to determine their perspectives with respect to the most appropriate timing and site of women's postpartum care. The team is currently completing a randomized clinical trial designed to increase the uptake of Postpartum Long-Acting Reversible Contraception among postpartum women.

Dr. Handler is currently completing her work as principal investigator of the Kellogg-funded *Well Woman Project*, which aimed to gather women's views and stories with respect to the well-woman visit. This project grew out of an emphasis on women's access to preventive care services, as well as an understanding that focusing on the well-woman visit is a necessary but not sufficient strategy for moving forward to improve women's and perinatal health outcomes and to reduce health inequities. In 2016, in conjunction with city health department partners, Listening Sessions were held with women in 8 cities and stories were collected from 102 women across the nation. Ten key themes emerged from the data, with multiple overall and city-specific recommendations shared with the 8 cities, partners and stakeholders across the U.S. Dr. Handler hopes to receive additional funding to work with the cities on implementation of 1-2 key recommendations over the next several years.



DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL  
AND OCCUPATIONAL  
HEALTH SCIENCES

STUDYING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Serap Erdal is Associate Professor of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences specializing in human exposure and health risk assessment. Her current research focuses on uncovering environmental factors that play a role in higher exposure and health risk burden in populations of Cook County, IL with the goal of stipulating policies or solutions that mitigate disproportionate exposure and risk burden on these populations. Her partners in this community-based research effort are community organizations that promote environmental justice in their neighborhoods, particularly, those serving Southeast Chicago and South Cook County.

Southeastern Cook County, IL (SCC), a highly diverse and low income region, has a long history of industrial manufacturing, which makes this location an ideal laboratory for environmental health and environmental justice research. With funding from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, Dr. Erdal formed a community organization-academia partnership and performed an interdisciplinary project as a first step towards uncovering community needs and perceptions for environmental conditions. The interdisciplinary project team included Dr. Janet Smith of UIC's College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs and Susan Kaplan, JD of SPH as co-investigators and Frank Pagone, a PhD candidate in environmental and occupational health sciences. The study findings revealed that the community residents are most concerned about air and land pollution due



to heavy mobile source pollution and past and on-going industrial activity along with a multitude of brownfield sites that remain to be returned to productive use. This information is critical for arming the communities with information necessary to begin developing hypotheses about potential risk factors at the community level for health end-points of concern to residents and to begin developing local training programs for public health improvement.

Currently, Dr. Erdal and PhD candidate Saisattha Noomnual, are collaborating with Kansas State University, Delta Institute and four community organizations in Chicago to assess air quality in four socio-economically disadvantaged communities with funding from the United States Environmental Protection Agency. In this citizen-science project, the goal is to investigate whether community-led research results in improved understanding of the air pollutant concentrations and the development of sustainable community-specific strategies to effectively monitor pollutants, and analyze and communicate results.

The common element of Dr. Erdal's research is to guide future environmental restoration, including air quality improvement, brownfields redevelopment, and sustainable land planning efforts in a manner that includes community organizations and residents as stakeholders in the process and where risk management plans are responsive to community concerns and needs that are uncovered in her research. ●





# Poor Overall Environmental Quality Linked to Elevated Cancer Rates

By Sharon Parmet



Dr. Jyotsna Jagai

Nationwide, counties with the poorest quality across five domains – air, water, land, the built environment and sociodemographic – had the highest incidence of cancer, according to a new study published in the journal Cancer. Poor air quality and factors of the built environment – such as the presence of major highways and the availability of public transit and housing – were the most strongly associated with high cancer rates, while water quality and land pollution had no measurable effect. The findings may help reduce cancer by driving policy to lower pollution in areas with high cancer rates linked to the environment.

Previous research has shown that genetics can be blamed for only about half of all cancers, suggesting that exposure to environmental toxins or socioeconomic factors may also play a role. “Most research has focused on single environmental factors like air pollution or toxins in water,” said Jyotsna Jagai, Research Assistant Professor of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences and lead author of the study. “But these single factors don’t paint a comprehensive picture of what a person is exposed to in their environment — and may not be as helpful in predicting cancer risk, which is impacted by multiple factors including the air you breathe, the water you drink, the neighborhood you live in, and your exposure to myriad toxins, chemicals and pollutants.”

To investigate the effects of overall environmental quality, the researchers looked at hundreds of variables, including air and water pollution, pesticide and radon levels, neighborhood safety, access to health services and healthy food, presence of heavily-trafficked highways and roads, and sociodemographic factors, such as poverty. Dr. Jagai and her colleagues used the U.S. EPA’s Environmental Quality Index, a county-level measure

incorporating more than 200 of these environmental variables and obtained cancer incidence rates from the National Cancer Institute’s Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results Program State Cancer Profiles. Cancer data were available for 85 percent of the 3,142 U.S. counties.

The average age-adjusted rate for all types of cancer was 451 cases per 100,000 people. Counties with poor environmental quality had higher incidence of cancer—on average, 39 more cases per 100,000 people—than counties with high environmental quality. Increased rates were seen for both males and females, and prostate and breast cancer demonstrated the strongest association with poor environmental quality.



The researchers found that high levels of air pollution, poor quality in the built environment and high levels of socio-demographic risk factors were most strongly associated with increased cancer rates in men and women. The strongest associations were seen in urban areas, especially for the air and built environment domains. Breast and prostate cancer were most strongly associated with poor air quality.

“Some of the counties we looked at were very large, with both urban and rural areas in a single county, so to tease apart the interplay between the measures of quality in our five domains and how they impact urban and rural areas,” Dr. Jagai said, “we will need to look at geographic areas smaller than counties.” ●

# \$8 Million grant to reduce tobacco use in high-use countries

Bloomberg Philanthropies has awarded the University of Illinois at Chicago \$8 million to accelerate the development of effective tobacco tax systems in low- and middle-income countries. As a new core partner, UIC joins six other global health organizations in the Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use, a nearly \$1 billion program to reduce the worldwide demand



Dr. Frank Chaloupka

for tobacco through comprehensive, evidence-based policy reform and public awareness campaigns.

Frank Chaloupka, Research Professor of Health Policy and Administration and principal investigator on the grant, will work to advance global progress on tobacco taxation. Dr. Chaloupka and his colleagues will use the funding to engage with policy-makers in countries with the highest and fastest-growing rates of tobacco use, including Bangladesh, China, India, Pakistan and others.

“Studies from around the world show that a substantial increase in tobacco tax is not only the most effective method of reducing tobacco use, it is also a driver of significant, long-

# Professor Named Distinguished Researcher of the Year

By Jacqueline Carey

Dr. Jamie Chriqui, Professor of Health Policy and Administration and Senior Research Scientist at the Institute for Health Research and Policy, is the recipient of the 2016 University of Illinois at Chicago Distinguished Researcher of the Year Award in the Social Sciences. Each year, the Researcher of the Year award recognizes 10 UIC scientists and scholars who are advancing knowledge in their fields. The Distinguished Researcher Award honors five researchers with a record of outstanding achievement.

Can changes to public policy improve health? Jamie Chriqui, professor of health policy and administration, says “absolutely.” Having studied issues like childhood obesity, tobacco use and chronic disease through the lens of public policy for more than 26 years, Dr. Chriqui is one of the nation’s foremost experts on using legislation and policy to address our most pressing health challenges. “My goal is to look at the broader social environment, from public transportation to school lunches, and study how our federal, state and local community laws, guidelines and ordinances can make health more accessible to the public,” she said.

With nearly 100 published scholarly articles, Dr. Chriqui’s work has been cited as background for a number of federal regulations on school district wellness policies that address physical activity, nutrition, wellness education and the sale of junk food in public schools.

Chriqui, who is also a member of the University of Illinois Cancer Center and a fellow of the university’s Institute for Health Policy



Dr. Jamie Chriqui

and Research, is currently the principal investigator on nine grant-funded research projects, all focusing on issues at the intersection of public policy, obesity, nutrition and physical activity.

Robin Mermelstein, director of the Institute for Health Policy and Research, nominated Dr. Chriqui for the award. “Dr. Chriqui’s work has widespread and clear impact,” Dr. Mermelstein said. “She addresses one of the most complex

health problems facing our nation today, and does so with outstanding methodological rigor, as well as with a keen eye towards the ultimate dissemination and real-world translation of her findings into policy and action. She is well deserving of this award.”

“I am honored that this research has been recognized and that is a reflection of the outstanding collaborative and team-orientated environment we have here at UIC,” Dr. Chriqui said. ●



lasting health and economic benefits,” said Dr. Chaloupka. His research has challenged the idea that many smokers are so dependent on nicotine they will continue to smoke no matter how much it costs. His work also provides evidence that tobacco control does not harm economies, a point directly in opposition to arguments put forth by the tobacco industry. “This work is ambitious, vital and necessary to reverse the global tobacco epidemic,” he said.

Photo credit: Jenny Fontaine



# Making a Difference in the Health of Populations Around the World

1 UNITED STATES

Dr. Ed Mensah, Associate Professor and Director of Public Health Informatics, was invited to serve as a Subject Matter Expert (SME) on a CDC Center for Global Health project titled “Technical Collaboration with Guyana Ministry of Health on E-Health Capacity Development.” The team developed a white paper which will be used by the Guyana Minister of Health to make a case before parliament for sustainable development and integration of e-health infrastructure within a general e-government initiative.



Dr. Ed Mensah

2 UNITED STATES

Mary Otoo (MPH '17) traveled to Yale University in New Haven, CT to present results from her Maternal Perceptions of Child Eye Health study in Ghana at the Global Health and Innovation Conference.



Mary Otoo (third from left) with Unite For Sight Executive Director Jennifer Staple-Clark and colleagues Dr. Seth Wayne and Dr. Gerald Osei-Poku.

3 UNITED STATES

The team at SPH's Great Lakes Center's World Health Organization Collaborating Center is working on 15 different projects, ranging from promoting occupational medicine training in low and middle income countries to addressing climate change adaptation in the Americas through collaborative work with Pan American Health Organization in Washington, D.C. The Center is directed by Dr. Linda Forst, Professor of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences.

4 MOROCCO

Alyson Lofthouse, Senior Associate Director of Global Health, Dr. Sam Dorevitch, Associate Professor and Director of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences, and Dr. David Hinkamp, Clinical Assistant Professor of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences, are traveling to Casablanca, Morocco in October to further our partnership with Mohammed VI University of the Health Sciences. Drs. Dorevitch and Hinkamp will teach an environmental health course and the team will discuss joint research endeavors and student exchanges, and conduct site visits to health entities.

5 KENYA

Students Kendall Anderson, PhD candidate in environmental and occupational health sciences, Amanda Consigli, MPH candidate in epidemiology, Nico Davis, MS candidate in epidemiology, and Obehi Ilenikhena, MPH candidate in environmental and occupational health sciences, will travel to Kisumu, Kenya this summer to conduct their thesis research or field practicum under the guidance of Dr. Bob Bailey or Dr. Sam Dorevitch.

6 MALDIVES

Dr. Lisa Powell, Distinguished Professor and Director of Health Policy and Administration, travelled to the Maldives with the World Health Organization and to Antigua with the Pan American Health Organization to serve as an expert advisor to help develop and implement fiscal policies to reduce sugar-sweetened beverage consumption and improve population health in these countries.



Dr. Lisa Powell presenting to Prime Minister Browne and the Cabinet of Antigua and Barbuda.

## Professor Receives Lifetime Achievement Award in Global Health

Dr. Peter Orris, Clinical Professor of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences at the UIC School of Public Health, received the Lifetime Achievement Award for Excellence in Global Health by the World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA) during the 15th World Congress on Public Health. This award, presented in Melbourne, Australia in April, was given in recognition of Dr. Orris' work in the context of the WFPHA's Environmental Health Working Group and in campaigns to improve environmental health.



Dr. Peter Orris

Dr. Orris, who also serves Chief of Service at the Occupational Health Service Institute within the University of Illinois Hospital and Health Sciences System, has been critical to the worldwide environmental health movement. He has been a major force for linking the practice of medicine with human rights, equality, occupational safety and environmental sustainability.

“I am particularly happy for this recognition of my work in environmental public health to have occurred at such an important time of opportunity,” Dr. Orris said as part of his acceptance speech. “It is particularly gratifying to receive this award from you - activists and thinkers of this public health movement that recognizes the broadest definition of the public’s health and holds firm to the vision of a better tomorrow with the threats of war, disease, and economic, racial, religious, sexual, and ethnic discrimination wiped away.”





# Visiting Scholar in Israeli Studies Enhances Global Health Program

The Israel Studies Project of the Jewish United Fund (JUF) was first inaugurated at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) in 2007 and at the School of Public Health (SPH) in 2012. The collaboration between UIC SPH and JUF aims to solve significant, contemporary global health challenges. Over the years, a close relationship has developed between Ben-Gurion University's (BGU) Public Health program and the SPH's Global Health Program. The two institutions have developed a partnership that includes students serving internships, participating in BGU's global health summer course, and presenting reports that make a real impact on public health policies, ranging from the health of asylum seekers to regulation of the chemical Bisphenol A (BPA).

Dr. Nadav Davidovitch, an epidemiologist and public health physician, is the third scholar hosted at UIC SPH. According to Alyson Lofthouse, Senior Associate Director of Global Health, his wide-ranging experience and expertise has enhanced the SPH learning environment. "Dr. Davidovitch has provided numerous educational modules and has presented to various audiences across the campus on issues including: the Israeli healthcare system; Healthy Cities, using his experience in the Negev; health and migration, focusing on the influx of asylum seekers; and neglected tropical diseases." Dr. Davidovitch also has facilitated student exchanges with BGU. To date, UIC has sent 10 Master of Public Health (MPH) candidates to Israel to conduct their required field experience.

"While many of my peers went to developing countries, I had a different experience in Israel. I lived in Tel Aviv, a modern metropolis, but I also had an opportunity to go on site visits at farms throughout the country. The opportunity to conduct public health work in an international setting was invaluable. I now feel more confident about pursuing global health work opportunities in a variety of settings after I graduate," said Lauren Hooberman (MPH '12). UIC intends to send two to three students to Ben-Gurion University this summer to conduct a field experience under his guidance.

UIC Professor of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Dr. Linda Forst will be a Dozer Visiting Professor at BGU this summer, expanding and deepening the partnership between UIC



SPH and BGU. Dr. Dani Filc has been selected as the JUF visiting scholar for the 2017-2018 academic year. "UIC SPH is proud of the scientific exchange opportunities, connections, and friends that are a product of this program and are grateful to JUF for its generous support," Ms. Lofthouse said. ●



Dr. Nadav Davidovitch

# Honoring Dr. An Li, Recipient of the Dr. Samuel and Mrs. Catherine Epstein Term Professorship in Cancer Prevention

On May 11, 2017, the UIC School of Public Health held its first Investiture Ceremony. Dr. An Li, Professor of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences, was named the Dr. Samuel and Mrs. Catherine Epstein Term Professor in Cancer Prevention.

"An investiture of a professor is one of the most significant highlights of a faculty member's academic life," said Dr. Robert Barish, Vice Chancellor of Health Affairs, who presided over the ceremony. "Bestowing such a position is a sign of appreciation and endorsement of the individual by the university, and strong belief in their accomplishments and future accomplishments," he said.

Dr. Li, who has been a faculty member at UIC SPH for twenty-one years, was joined by family members and friends as she received this honor. As an environmental chemist, Dr. Li conducts studies on how human activities influence the natural environment, and how these changes in turn affect human health. Dr. Sam Dorevitch, Associate Professor and Director of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences, and Dr. Erik R. Christensen, Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, both spoke about the achievements of Dr. Li and why she was chosen as the recipient of this term professorship. "Her productivity and versatility in research has led her to publish 2 books, over 70 journal papers, and present more than 100 conference papers and abstracts," Dr. Christensen noted. "Dr. Li's work has been cited more than 3,000 times. As a result, environmental scientists around the world use her techniques."

Named in honor of Dr. Samuel Epstein and his wife, Catherine, this five-year term professorship will reside in the Division of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences. A faculty emeritus at UIC SPH, Dr. Epstein was a pioneer, trailblazer and leader in his field, known for his many contributions on avoidable causes of cancer, for which he was given the Right Livelihood Award in 1998. Over the course of his career, Dr. Epstein



Speakers included Drs. Erik R. Christensen, Samuel Dorevitch, Peter Orris, An Li, Lorraine Conroy and Robert Barish



Dr. Samuel Epstein and Mrs. Catherine Epstein congratulate Dr. An Li

became an internationally recognized authority on the avoidable causes of cancer, particularly unknown exposures to industrial carcinogens in air, water, the workplace, and consumer products.

**"I will do my best to continue pushing science forward and contributing to the cause of environmental cancer prevention."**

Dr. Epstein played a vital role in public policy. He authored congressional legislation, served as a consultant to the U.S. Senate Committee on Public Works, and was an expert member of several federal committees including the EPA's Health Effects Advisory Committee, and the Department of Labor's Advisory Committee on the Regulation of Occupational Carcinogens. Dr. Epstein often served as a key expert on the banning of hazardous products and pesticides including DDT, Aldrin and Chlordane. He has published some 270 peer reviewed articles, and authored or co-authored 20 books including: the prize-winning 1978 "The Politics of Cancer."

Drs. Epstein and Li were able to meet one another for the first time at the investiture ceremony. "I am most thankful to Dr. Samuel Epstein, Mrs. Catherine Epstein, and the entire Epstein family, for establishing and granting this honor to me," Dr. Li said. "Dr. Epstein is a pioneer and his work is a great inspiration for me and for many others. By following his footsteps, we can do better. I will do my best to continue pushing science forward and contributing to the cause of environmental cancer prevention." ●





The UIC School of Public Health has been supported through the years by the generous gifts of many loyal friends. We are proud to honor the distinguished group of leadership donors who, year after year, help the University prepare our students for success. Membership in the Founders Circle recognizes donors who make annual gifts of \$500 or more. Benefits of membership include:

- Invitation to annual Founders Circle reception
- Special communications from the Dean's Office
- Exclusive invitations to public health lectures
- Founders Circle recognition items



Create a better tomorrow for public health students, educators and the communities they serve by including the UIC School of Public Health in your estate plan today.

You can direct your gift to any fund or program at the school, making a UIC SPH education more affordable for students in need, or supporting research that improves people's health and changes lives.

Your gift helps us prepare the next generation of leaders, thinkers and doers and inspire answers to tomorrow's biggest challenges.

To learn more about the Founders Circle or Legacy Society, contact the Office of Advancement at [SPHAdvancement@uic.edu](mailto:SPHAdvancement@uic.edu).

# Irving Harris Foundation Sets Two-Year Fundraising Challenge for Maternal and Child Health

The UIC SPH Office of Advancement is thrilled to announce that, thanks to over 100 new and increased donations to the Center of Excellence in Maternal and Child Health (CoE in MCH), the School met the first part of a two-year challenge grant from the Irving Harris Foundation and exceeded its fundraising goal!

The Irving Harris Foundation has supported the Center since its inception in 1982, providing tuition assistance for students in the MCH concentration. "Irving Harris funding makes an invaluable contribution to our Center of Excellence in Maternal and Child Health, allowing us to support Maternal and Child Health Harris Scholars who have an opportunity to develop their leadership abilities in both MCH practice and research. We are so grateful for the match, as it allows us to provide support to additional students at a time when many are having difficulty paying for their education. The Irving Harris Foundation has always been a staunch supporter of our program and we are deeply appreciative," explained Dr. Arden Handler, Director of the Center.

Because of their longstanding and impactful support, UIC SPH presented the Foundation with *The Champion of Public Health Award* at this year's Annual Alumni Celebration. The award is presented to a supporter of UIC SPH who, through direct financial support, has demonstrated outstanding charitable responsibility, and whose generosity encourages others to participate in public health philanthropy. The Foundation's mission is to enhance quality of life through the creation and

development of innovative programs, preventive practices, and public policies that promote social justice, address inequity and create opportunities for creative expression.

Now entering the second year of the challenge grant, UIC SPH encourages all alumni and friends to make a gift to the Center today! "Support will allow the CoE in MCH to continue to provide education and experiences that prepare students to be leaders in the MCH field and beyond," said Dan Weiss (MPH '15). The CoE in MCH trains students to support and promote the health and well-being of women, children, and families. Mr. Weiss acknowledges the impact of his training from the Center, saying "Very few days go by when I do not tap into the personal and professional development I received from the UIC CoE in MCH. Whether I am applying personal leadership techniques when working with community organizations, or supporting MCH programs within my agency through data-driven and evidence-informed decision making, the lessons and skills I learned at UIC are always on my mind."



Phyllis Glink of the Irving Harris Foundation accepts the Champion of Public Health Award at the Annual Alumni Celebration on March 30, 2017.



Arden Handler (center), Director of the CoE in MCH, is joined by members of the MCH community at the 2017 Annual Alumni Celebration.

All gifts, no matter how large or small, have an impact. **All new or increased donations made to the CoE in MCH during June 1, 2017 – May 31, 2018 will be matched dollar for dollar!** Questions about supporting the CoE in MCH can be directed to Tamara Jossierand, Assistant Dean of Advancement, at [tmjoss12@uic.edu](mailto:tmjoss12@uic.edu). ●



# Turning Brownfields into “Greenfields:”

## UIC SPH students and community members repurpose vacant lots as solar farms on Chicago’s South Side

By Janice Cantieri

Repurposing formerly unproductive land for renewable energy provides surrounding communities with a sustainable, clean energy source, and creates new opportunities in low-income, urban areas.

Undergraduate public health students have been working with Bruce Montgomery, the Director of the Urban Innovation Center, to find suitable sites for solar farms in Englewood and Bronzeville. Many of the vacant lots in the community are former industrial sites, or brownfields, and potentially contaminated with toxic chemicals or waste.

“There are large amounts of land that are underutilized in urban communities, especially in Englewood. It’s very difficult to bring those properties back to productive use because before anyone can do it, they’ve got to clean up what was there before,” Mr. Montgomery said.

Mr. Montgomery is working with the community to create micro-grid solar farms. Community members could also be trained in maintaining and operating the panels, he said. And on sunny days when the panels generate excess energy, it can flow back to the grid, reverse the meter, and create new sources of income for the community, he said.



Bruce Montgomery, Director of the Urban Innovation Center, giving a tour of Englewood.

“These communities are low-income, so they wouldn’t just have a few thousand dollars to just go off and put solar up on their roof. The idea is that you could identify one of these brownfields and populate it with solar,” he said. “The solar energy can be produced and shared in the surrounding homes, and in the first time in forever, these residents would be something other than a rate payer, they could be an energy producer.”

UIC SPH students are involved with the project as part of “Public Health 360: Local Citizenship and Community Health Initiatives,” taught by Dr. Laurel Berman (PhD ’06, MS ’02), adjunct assistant professor, and Dr. Serap Erdal, associate professor of environmental and occupational health sciences at UIC SPH. The community-focused course gets the students out in the community where they can apply what they’ve learned in the classroom.

“We’ve been working on community engagement and learning how to partner with organizations in order to address a specific public health issue. We’ve been doing research on brownfield sites and learning how to gain community trust,” said student Evelyn Velazquez.

Ms. Velazquez and her group, Melissa León, Feliciano Ocegueda, and Jamie Danemayer, have been working with the Urban Innovation Center to map the area’s vacant lots and determine what clean-up might be needed before the sites can be used for solar farms. Later in the semester, the group will introduce



Students Jamie Danemayer and Feliciano Ocegueda prepare a map of vacant properties in the Bronzeville area.



“...in the first time in forever, these residents would be something other than a rate payer, they could be an energy producer.”

community health, social, and environmental issues. Many are in communities on Chicago’s South Side.

their findings and explain the benefits of urban solar farms and other energy innovation projects at a community meeting.

Students learn the history of the vacant sites by speaking with community members and nonprofits, and researching local and state databases, Dr. Berman said. The site history gives them an idea of what clean-up is needed before the site can be safely used for other purposes.

“With properties like this, sometimes there’s no contamination. I think an estimate would be about 30 percent are not contaminated. So, brownfields are an opportunity for redevelopment,” Dr. Berman said.

The urban solar project is just in the initial stages, but with community buy-in, an agreement with the local energy provider, and sufficient funding, it could become a reality.

In addition to the urban solar project, Drs. Berman and Erdal are managing twelve other student projects focused on



Professor Laurel Berman (center) with students mapping vacant properties near Englewood.

One student group is working with Cheryl Johnson’s organization, People for Community Recovery (PCR), to convert a former gas station in Riverdale into a museum honoring the environmental justice movement. Ms. Johnson’s mother Hazel, the founder of PCR, was an early leader in the environmental justice movement.

“Cheryl Johnson is following in her mother’s footsteps. Our students are helping her turn projects into reality. The work also has a larger significance, because People for Community Recovery has prominence nationally [in the history of environmental justice],” Dr. Erdal said.

Some of the projects focus on turning vacant land into healthy, usable space or housing, and others are working with those experiencing homelessness. One group has partnered with the Southeast Environmental Task Force on the City’s Southeast side to establish a database tracking the activities surrounding petcoke, a potentially toxic byproduct of the petroleum refining process. All of the projects engage students with the health and environmental issues affecting their local communities.

“We tell them from day one that they will be working with communities, applying what they are learning in the class in the field. The students know that this is just a first stab—it takes years to build relationships in communities, but we are getting them to think about it early,” Dr. Berman said. ●



# Celebrating the Achievements of Students, Alumni, Faculty and Staff

**SUSAN ALTFELD**, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, is a co-investigator and Memoona Hasnain (PhD '01) a co-PI on the *ENGAGE-IL Online Geriatric Training Program*. This free Online Education Program offers 32 healthcare modules developed, written and reviewed by interprofessional content experts. Visit [engageil.com](http://engageil.com).



Juana Ballesteros and Jamesetta Mator

**JUANA BALLESTEROS** (MPH '05) and **JAMESETTA MATOR** (BA '14), MPH candidate and co-chair of Minority Students for the Advancement of Public Health, worked together at the College, Career & Workforce Development Expo portion of the Boys and Girls Club of America national teen leadership conference. Over 2,500 teens attended the conference and they engaged many of them in exploring careers in public health.

**FRANK CERVONE**, Director of Information Technology, won the best paper award from the International Association of Knowledge Management at the 17th European Conference on Knowledge Management.

**FRANK CHALOUPKA**, research professor of health policy and administration, is principal investigator on an \$8 million grant from Bloomberg Philanthropies to accelerate the development of effective tobacco tax systems in low- and middle-income countries.

**JAMIE F. CHRIQUI**, Professor of Health Policy and Administration, has been named UIC Researcher of the Year in the Social Sciences.

**FAITH FLETCHER**, Assistant Professor of Community Health Sciences, received the National Quality Forum's 40 Under 40 Award for Minority Health.

**MEMOONA HASNAIN** (PhD '01) is the lead editor of a new book about the health of South Asian Americans. "The Health of South Asians in the United States: An Evidence-based Guide for Policy and Program Development" focuses on people who came to the U.S. from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

**JENI HEBERT-BEIRNE**, Assistant Professor of Community Health Sciences, and her CHS 431 students assisted with the development of the Healthy Chicago 2.0 Community Health Assessment. Together they also published a manuscript in the *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice* (2017) with the qualitative findings of the Themes and Strengths assessment: "Enhancing Themes and Strengths Assessment: Leveraging Academic-Led Qualitative Inquiry in Community Health Assessment to Uncover Roots of Community Health Inequities."



Dr. Faith Fletcher

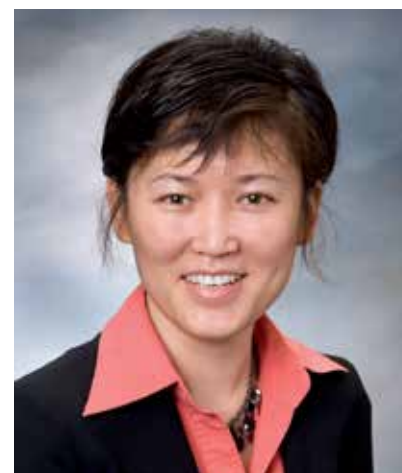
**BETH ISAACS**, (MPH '98) Founder and President of Illinois Birth Justice, was recognized for Outstanding Commitment in Community Service, as one of eight "Trailblazing Women in Labor and Business" by Illinois State Treasurer Michael Frerichs at a Women's History Month Celebration.

**JUN MA**, Professor of Health Policy and Administration, has been elected to the Academy of Behavioral Medicine Research. The Academy is the honorary senior scientist society for those whose research exists at the interface of behavior and medicine. Election to this society is reserved for those with national and international behavioral medicine research excellence.

**AL MASI**, Professor of Medicine and Epidemiology, has been named UIC Researcher of the Year in the Clinical Sciences.



Dr. Memoona Hasnain



Dr. Jun Ma

**ED MENSAH**, Associate Professor and Director of Public Health Informatics, was invited to serve as a Subject Matter Expert on a CDC Center for Global Health project titled "Technical Collaboration with Guyana Ministry of Health on E-Health Capacity Development."

**YAMILE MOLINA**, Assistant Professor of Community Health Sciences, received the National Quality Forum's 40 Under 40 Award for Minority Health.



Dr. Yamile Molina

The American Federation for Aging Research (AFAR), a national non-profit organization whose mission is to support and advance healthy aging through biomedical research, recognized **S. JAY OLSHANSKY**, Professor of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, by presenting him with its Irving S. Wright Award of Distinction. The award recognizes exceptional contributions in the field of aging.

**PETER ORRIS**, Professor and Chief of Service for Occupational and Environmental Medicine, was honored at the World Public Health Congress in Melbourne by the World Federation of Public Health Associations with the Lifetime Achievement Award. This prestigious award was presented in recognition of his work done in the context of the Environmental Health Working Group and in the campaigns to improve environmental health.

**MARY OTOO**, MPH candidate in epidemiology and global health, presented on her field work practicum in Ghana at the Unite for Sight conference.

**GARTH RAUSCHER**, Associate Professor of Epidemiology, is co-author of a paper titled "Impact of a False-Positive Screening Mammogram on Subsequent Screening Behavior and Stage at Breast Cancer Diagnosis" published in the *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention*, an American Association for Cancer Research journal.

**ANDREW GREGG STEINER** (MPH '94) has joined JGS Lifecare's Leavitt Family Jewish Home as executive director. He manages the organization's 200-bed senior nursing facility in Longmeadow, MA. He also teaches health-systems management at the University of Connecticut School of Business.

**STEPHANIE WEAVER** (MPH '87), CWHC, authored the book *The Migraine Relief Plan: An 8-Week Transition to Better Eating, Fewer Headaches, and Optimal Health*, which was a #1 best-seller and new release on Amazon.

**JOE ZANONI**, Research Assistant Professor and Director of Continuing Education and Outreach in Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences, is the recipient of the Silver Circle Award. Since 1966, this Award has been presented to some of UIC's best teachers by the selection committee made up of graduating seniors. Dr. Zanoni received this honor at the 2017 commencement ceremony.



Dr. Joe Zanoni

**ROWIDA ZATAR**, BA '18 candidate, represented UIC at the Advancing Campus Community Poetry Slam. Poets from around the world gathered in Chicago for CUPSI 2017, competing for top honors in collegiate poetry slam.



Rowida Zatar

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# 2017 Annual Alumni Celebration

The UIC School of Public Health held its Annual Alumni Celebration on March 30, 2017 at the Crystal Gardens at Navy Pier. The evening’s reception included a silent auction, which raised \$4,800 for the Student Travel Fund. More than 230 guests enjoyed dinner and an awards presentation to alumni and donors who were recognized for making significant contributions to the field of public health. Alumni from the school’s Master of Healthcare Administration (MHA) program were in attendance to celebrate the program’s 10 Year Anniversary of Alumni.



**LEFT**  
Janet Lin, MD, (MPH ‘04), second from left, received best wishes as the recipient of the **Health Equity Advocacy Award**, from Dimitri Azar, Dean of the College of Medicine, Eric Stewart, Robert Barish, Vice Chancellor of Health Affairs, and Jenny Barish.



**ABOVE**  
Reginald Cantave, (MHA ‘09), FACHE, who was a member of the MHA Program’s first class, received the **Rising Star Award**.

**LEFT**  
Catherine A. Counard, MD, (MPH ‘02) was joined by members of her family when she received the **Health Policy and Administration Alumni Achievement Award**.



**LEFT**  
Guests enjoyed bidding on the silent auction, which raised funds to support the Student Travel Fund.

**RIGHT**  
Mary Otoo (MPH ‘17) speaks about her global health experiences and how scholarship support made it possible.



**ABOVE**  
Denise Dell Isola and Phyllis Glink from the Irving Harris Foundation accepted the **Champion of Public Health Award** for their many years of support of the Maternal and Child Health Program.



Alumni and students from the Master of Healthcare Administration Program celebrate the 10 Year Anniversary of MHA Alumni.



Celebrating  
*10 Years*  
of MHA Alumni

## Alumni Awardees

Rising Star Award  
Reginald Cantave, MHA ‘07, FACHE

Health Equity Advocacy Award  
Janet Lin, MD, MPH ‘04

Champion of Public Health Award  
Irving Harris Foundation

Health Policy and Administration Alumni Achievement Award  
Catherine A. Counard, MD, MPH ‘02

Dr. Naomi Morris Alumni Achievement Award in Maternal and Child Health  
Madiha F. Qureshi, MPH ‘09





# Congratulations to the Class of 2017

More than 300 graduates were celebrated at the UIC School of Public Health commencement ceremony on May 5, 2017. Graduates and their guests were welcomed by UIC Chancellor Michael D. Amiridis and Patrick Fitzgerald, a member of the University of Illinois Board of Trustees, both of whom gave opening remarks.

This year's commencement address was delivered by Julie Morita, Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Public Health. Dr. Morita congratulated the graduates and thanked them for choosing to pursue a public health career. "Public health needs a strong work force ready to tackle emerging and re-emerging threats like Zika virus and the heroin crisis - along with health disparities in life expectancy, HIV and infant mortality, which continue to plague our city, our state and our nation," Dr. Morita said. "Thank you for stepping forward to address these challenges!"



Professor Zaroni receives the Silver Circle Award from PHSA President A'ville Bailey

Interim Dean, Lorraine M. Conroy and Richard Sewell, Assistant Dean for Community and Public Health Practice, presented the following degrees: Doctor of Philosophy, Doctor of Public Health, Master of Science, Master of Healthcare Administration, and Bachelor of Arts. After the conferral of degrees, the graduates were congratulated and encouraged to stay connected to their alma mater by Griselle Torres (DrPH '14, MPH '06), Vice President of the Alumni Board. Dr. Torres urged the graduates to get involved by attending alumni events, hosting a student intern, or volunteering and donating to the school.

An important part of the ceremony was the presentation of awards. A'ville Bailey, who served as President of the Public Health Student Association, presented the Silver Circle Award, a prestigious award determined by student votes for the campus' best teachers, to Joseph Zaroni, Research Assistant Professor, and Joshua Prudowsky, Lecturer in the School's undergraduate



Dr. Morita delivering the commencement address.

program. The Bernard H. Baum Golden Apple Award, which is presented each year to a faculty member for his or her outstanding teaching and extraordinary service to students, was awarded to Sam Dorevitch, Associate Professor and Director of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences, and Karen Peters, Clinical Assistant Professor of Community Health Sciences.

The Alan W. Donaldson Memorial Award, named for UIC SPH's first Associate Dean, is given to a student who demonstrates academic excellence, leadership and service. This year, it was presented to Alina Flores, who earned her DrPH last summer. Dr. Flores, who is a Health Scientist in the Prevention Research and Translation Branch at the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, challenged her fellow graduates to go beyond



Dr. Alina Flores accepts the Alan W. Donaldson Award from Dr. Susan Altfeld, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

their comfort zones and try something new. "In a time of shrinking public health budgets, a changing public health landscape, and being expected to do more with less, there is a growing need for public health professionals who can branch out of their discipline-specific boxes and be successful when thrown into situations that might be new or different," she said. "Volunteer for activities that might be beyond your expertise...and be willing to branch out and embrace something different." ●



## HEALTHY SPIRITS

Alumni and friends attend a Healthy Spirits event held on May 11, 2017 at Plymouth Rooftop Bar in Chicago.



## RGB

The Recent Graduate Board hosted alumni and students at Replay Lincoln Park on February 9, 2017.



## MHA LUNCHEON

Graduates of the Master of Healthcare Administration program attended a luncheon in honor of the program's 10 year anniversary on January 24, 2017.



## ALUMNI LEARNING SERIES

Interim Dean Lorraine M. Conroy, center, welcomed UIC alumni Margaret Byrne and Jon Stuyvesant, who screened their documentary, *Raising Bertie*, at the Annual Alumni Learning Series on March 2, 2017.



## APHA

More than 200 people attended the APHA Alumni and Friends Reception in Denver on October 31, 2016.

## 2017 Events

Please consider joining us for the following events:

**OCTOBER 4, 2017**

**6:00 PM – 8:00 PM**

**Daniel Swartzman Endowed Ethics Lecture**

Guest Speaker: Lisa M. Lee  
University Club of Chicago,  
76 E. Monroe Street, Chicago, IL 60603

**OCTOBER 19, 2017**

**6:00 PM – 8:00 PM**

**Cure Violence Gala Reception  
The Arts Club of Chicago**

201 E. Ontario Street, Chicago, IL 60611

**OCTOBER 28, 2017**

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**Ignite: The Campaign for UIC  
Kick Off Celebration**

**NOVEMBER 6, 2017**

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**APHA Alumni & Friends Reception**

STAY  
TUNE  
NEW

For more information on all of these events, visit [publichealth.uic.edu/alumni](http://publichealth.uic.edu/alumni).



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