The Carolina-Shaw Partnership for the Elimination of Health Disparities

This partnership between UNC and Shaw University, a historically Black university, is working to eliminate differences in minority health care and status on several levels. One of the most important aspects of the center’s work is in establishing research resources and improving research infrastructure at Shaw so that more African-American college students can become health researchers. The center is also training new investigators at both institutions in health disparities research methodology, and collaborating on a church-based community outreach project.

The partnership has additionally created the health disparities curriculum at UNC and another at Shaw, awarded pilot funds to junior faculty at UNC and historically Black colleges and universities in North Carolina, and spurred intense inter-university faculty collaboration.

“The structure of the partnership maximizes the exchange of scientific and programmatic activity between UNC, Shaw University, and the North Carolina Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities,” says Dr. Daniel Howard, the partnership’s co-director. Howard is professor of health policy and director of the Institute for Health, Social, and Community Research at Shaw University in Raleigh, N.C.

Funded by the National Institutes of Health, National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities, the partnership is directed by Dr. Paul Godley, adjunct associate professor of epidemiology and biostatistics at the UNC School of Public Health and professor of hematology and oncology at the UNC School of Medicine. Dr. Timothy Carey is the partnership’s deputy director. Carey directs the UNC Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research and is clinical professor of epidemiology in the UNC School of Public Health and professor of medicine in the UNC School of Medicine.

Interdisciplinary Certificate in Health Disparities

The Interdisciplinary Certificate in Health Disparities, an integrated program of courses and seminars at the UNC School of Public Health, trains health professionals to assess disparities, conduct basic science on contributing factors, measure access to care, evaluate the role of race and racism in health, and develop and evaluate interventions designed to reduce health disparities.

The certificate program is part of ECHO, the UNC Program on Ethnicity, Culture and Health Outcomes, a joint program of the Schools of Public Health and Medicine. The health disparities curriculum, on which the certificate program is based, was developed through a grant originally was developed through a grant from the Commonwealth Foundation and the Public Health Leadership Program. The curriculum is directed by Dr. Vijaya Hogan, clinical associate professor of maternal and child health in the UNC School of Public Health and adjunct associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology in the UNC School of Medicine. Hogan and Dr. Anissa Vines, research assistant professor of epidemiology at the School and associate director of ECHO, co-direct the certificate program.

Students in Action

Even as they pursue their degrees, undergraduate and graduate students at the UNC School of Public Health are doing practical public health work in communities in the United States and abroad.

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Students' professional experience. They're networking not only with professionals and public health experts, but also with other students who will be working in the health field. "The event is also an important educational event for public health practitioners, human services professionals, research staff, and students and faculty from other universities,” DeSouza says. The topic for the 2007 conference is “HIV/AIDS after 25 years: Where things were, are, and are going for minority communities.” The keynote speaker will be Dr. David J. Malebranche, assistant professor of medicine at Emory University’s School of Medicine, AIDS researcher with a public health background and physician who treats AIDS patients in Atlanta.

The student organizers want to keep the focus domestic, White says. They plan to look at HIV/AIDS in various minority communities in the United States. "We want to look at college-age students and the different issues for women. We hope to have representatives come and represent the different minority groups—African-American, Latino, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian.”

DeSouza and White served on the planning committee for last year’s conference on “community-based participatory research.” “It’s a major conference, and a lot goes into organizing it,” White says. “It’s beneficial for students to be involved in planning something like this.”

The Evolution of the School’s Annual Minority Health Conference

### Students' Professional Experience

A large part of public health is bringing your knowledge to the public, so having the experience of planning something major like this is great,” says LaToya White, one of the co-chairs of the 2007 Minority Health Conference, to be held February 23 at the UNC William and Ida Friday Center for Continuing Education. White and co-chair Nancy DeSouza are graduate students in the Health Behavior and Health Education department in the UNC School of Public Health. They’re also members of the Minority Student Caucus, which launched the annual event in 1977 (see page 31). The conference is the oldest student-organized minority health conference in the United States. Every year, it draws hundreds of students, professionals and community members from across the country. Last year, more than 300 people attended.

“You can experience all aspects of public health at the conference, and it really influences how students see themselves as professionals coming into public health,” White says. “Students hear firsthand what works well for other people, and they also hear from community members. They’re better able to serve their communities because of this experience.” DeSouza echoes that view: “One of the benefits of the conference is getting all these different voices in the same room,” she says. “It adds to students’ professional experience. They’re networking not only with professionals and public health experts, but also with other students who will be working in the health field.”

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(continued on page 44)
this because these skills will be needed later when working in the field of public health.

The Minority Student Caucus was formed in the early 1970s, in part to help diversify the profession by attracting more students of color to the School. Other School organizations involved in the conference include the Student Union Board, the Minority Health Project and the N.C. Institute for Public Health. The North Carolina Department of Health also supports the event, along with the UNC School of Public Health. The conference keynote lecture is broadcast each year by satellite and Internet, and the lecture abstract, slides and Webcast are archived online at the conference Web site at www.minority.unc.edu/sph/minconf. Videotapes of the broadcast are distributed by the Public Health Foundation.

These technologies expand the conference’s impact beyond the roughly 500 people who take part each year. “I’ve only been able to ‘attend’ the Webcast of these lectures,” Professor Alice Furumoto-Dawson of the University of Chicago told past organizers. “Yet, every year the UNC School of Public Health Minority Health Conference Webcast and its associated Web site have been among the most informative and useful events/resources I access during the year.”

Through the Action-Oriented Community Diagnosis class (see page 57), student teams get real-world experience with communities and service providers and learn to analyze the social determinants of health. In this class and in many other ways, public health professionals still in training at the School are putting their education—and their passion—to work on community health issues, and they’re broadening their knowledge at the same time. Here are a few examples:

Naman Shah, who received his Bachelor of Science in Public Health from the School’s Department of Environmental Sciences and Engineering in May 2006, posed with youngsters from the Children’s Aid Clinic in Georgetown, Guyana, where he volunteered with at-risk youth in December 2005. Shah traveled to Guyana to initiate a study he designed that will examine and establish genetic markers for the resistance of a new anti-malarial drug.

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¡A su salud! ("To your health!") is an innovative, multimedia Spanish language program built around authentic health situations. The intermediate course is offered as an elective to residential and distance education students at the UNC School of Public Health as well as the other UNC health science schools, the School of Social Work, and to undergraduates in the UNC College of Arts and Sciences’ Department of Romance Languages. The Office of Continuing Education at UNC’s School of Public Health and the UNC William Friday Center for Continuing Education also offer the intermediate course via a distance learning format to those outside the university. And, the curriculum’s publisher—Yale University Press—offers a free guide for those who wish to use the intermediate course materials for self-study available through their Web site at http://yalepress.yale.edu/ypbooks/salud.

Now the Salud team—an interdisciplinary group of health professionals and Spanish-language educators from across the Carolina campus—is hard at work on an introductory-level program. A professional film company is shooting its centerpiece, a broadcast-quality Spanish soap opera or telenovela, and they’re underlining its realism by doing some of the filming at the UNC Ambulatory Care Center.

Claire Lorch, Salud project director and a clinical instructor in the Public Health Leadership Program (PHLP) at the UNC School of Public Health, says that preparing health professionals to communicate more effectively with their Latino patients can help improve health outcomes. “Latinos in need of medical care often face enormous challenges,” she says. “Few health care professionals speak Spanish or really understand Latino immigrant culture. As a result, Latinos rarely receive adequate preventive care, and they are less likely to follow treatment guidelines. Latinos tend to enter the system only when they urgently need services, and that puts a strain on their health and on the health care system.” Nationwide, she notes, fifty percent of Latino immigrants are unable to speak English sufficiently well to communicate with their health care providers.

“If a provider can communicate directly with patients, there’s a greater bond there; a greater chance the provider will have the full picture, get the context,” says another member of the Salud team, Christina A. Harlan, a research assistant professor in the PHLP and a public health nurse who also teaches in the UNC School of Nursing. “If you don’t have the language or if you bring in an interpreter, it totally changes the dynamic.”

Cast and crew for ¡A su salud! ("To your health!") multi-media Spanish language program film a broadcast-quality Spanish soap opera on the Carolina campus. The program is designed to help health professionals provide better care to their Spanish-speaking patients. Here, Dr. May Farnsworth, a lecturer in Spanish in the UNC Department of Romance Languages, portrays a distraught Hispanic mother trying to relay her daughter’s medical needs to a pharmacist, played by Frank Ballhaus. ¡A su salud! is offered to students through the UNC School of Public Health.