After successful testing, Sobsey, Brown and others established the Carolina Global Water Partnership, a research collaboration between UNC’s Gillings School of Global Public Health and its Kenan-Flagler Business School, which is exploring ways to commercialize household water treatment technologies in developing countries.

For more information, visit www.sph.unc.edu/news/sobsey.html.

Water filter project wins Kenan-Flagler Carolina Challenge

“Carolina Liquid Assets,” part of Carolina Global Water Partnership, run by a team of students from both the public health and business schools, took first prize in the 2008 Carolina Challenge entrepreneurial business-plan competition sponsored by the UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School.

The team won the $15,000 John Stedman Social Entrepreneurship Award for their business plan to manufacture and distribute ceramic water purifiers in Cambodia. They hope eventually to scale the operation throughout Southeast Asia and beyond.

Public health students and faculty took second prize, too. Applied Microproducts, Inc., won $7,500 in the competition’s commercial category. The company, developed by Environmental Sciences and Engineering Professor Dr. Frederic Pfaender, in conjunction with others, makes environmentally-friendly wood-treatment products for industry utility poles to replace the hazardous materials currently used.

For more information, visit www.sph.unc.edu/news/entrepreneurs.html.

School’s Nutrition Research Institute

To celebrate opening of new research center

The School’s Nutrition Research Institute (NRI) in Kannapolis, N.C., will celebrate the opening of a new 126,000-square-foot research center in November 2008. NRI researchers and staff moved into the new building in August. The new center houses state-of-the-art equipment that will allow NRI scientists to study how nutrition can enhance human health.

NRI, part of the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health, is devoted to discovering why people differ greatly in metabolism and nutrient requirements. The institute uses cutting-edge genomic and metabolomic biotechnology to develop innovative approaches to understanding the role of diet and activity in normal brain development, in the prevention of cancer and in the prevention and treatment of obesity and eating disorders. Metabolomics is the systematic study of metabolites — small molecules generated in the process of metabolism.

“We have much of the methodology available that could allow us to understand why people’s metabolisms are so different,” says Dr. Steven Zeisel, NRI’s director and Kenan Distinguished University Professor of nutrition and pediatrics in the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health and the UNC School of Medicine.

NRI is located on the N.C. Research Campus in Kannapolis, about 25 miles northeast of Charlotte, N.C. The campus is a public-private partnership, spearheaded by David Murdock, owner and chairman of the board of Dole Food Company, Inc. The new center will house a metabolic kitchen, clinical facilities, a cognitive assessment suite, high-tech laboratories, office space and, tentatively, a body composition laboratory in which researchers can measure body density and fat.

“This institute will result in breakthroughs in how we use nutrition to enhance human health,” Zeisel says. “We will be able to tailor recommendations on nutrition to the individual and not just give general guidelines. We can change how nutrition is practiced, and by so doing, change people’s lives.”

For more information on the Nutrition Research Institute, visit www.nri.unc.edu.