Dr. Jonathan B. Oberlander, associate professor of health policy and administration at the UNC School of Public Health, presented the 2008 Fred T. Foard Jr. Memorial Lecture on April 14, 2008, at the William and Ida Friday Center for Continuing Education in Chapel Hill. Oberlander is an associate professor of social medicine at the UNC School of Medicine, adjunct political science associate professor at UNC and research fellow at the UNC Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research.

He is a nationally-recognized expert on health care reform—a major issue in the 2008 presidential race when candidates are being called upon to articulate plans for expanding coverage while controlling costs. To shed light on this issue, Oberlander authored the lead perspectives in the Oct. 25 and Nov. 22 issues of the New England Journal of Medicine. The first article explored why past health reform efforts have failed; the second analyzed the health reform plans of current leading presidential candidates (see www.nejm.org).

Dr. Robert Temple, director of the Office of Drug Evaluation, which regulates cardio-renal, neuropharmacologic and psychopharmacologic drugs, has written extensively on the design and conduct of clinical trials. His lecture, titled “FDA Drug Approval Process, Potential Efficiencies and Active Control Trials,” was sponsored by the UNC Center for Innovations in Clinical Trials and the School of Public Health.

Stephanie Nolen, Africa correspondent for the Globe and Mail, the national newspaper of Canada, spoke movingly about Africa’s AIDS Pandemic at a lecture at the School on Nov. 7, 2007. The presentation, titled “28: Telling the Human Stories Behind Africa’s AIDS Pandemic,” was part of the Dean’s Lecture Series.

Nolen is the author of three books—28: Stories of AIDS in Africa, Promised the Moon: the Untold Story of the First Women in the Space Race and Shakespeare’s Face. At 35, she is a six-time nominee for Canada’s top reporting prize, the National Newspaper Award, and a back-to-back winner of the International Reporting Award. She was the recipient of the 2003, 2004 and 2006 Amnesty International Award for Human Rights Reporting, for reports from war zones in Uganda and Sudan. She has reported from more than 40 countries around the world.

Dr. Robert Temple, research professor of health policy and administration at the UNC School of Public Health, spoke on “Microcredit and Global Health” at a Dean’s Lecture Series presentation on Sept. 24, 2007, at the School. Microcredit is a financial innovation that seeks to address the issue of global poverty. Small loans are extended to the impoverished or unemployed so they can build independent businesses. Leatherman is researching the impact of microcredit on global health.

Leatherman is distinguished associate of Darwin College at the University of Cambridge in England and is the first Gillings Visiting Professor at the UNC School of Public Health. The professorship was established last year with funding from Dennis Gillings, CBE (Commander of the British Empire), and his wife, Joan Gillings, a former UNC biostatistics professor, is chairwoman and chief executive officer of Quintiles Transnational Corp.

Suggest a speaker you would like us to bring to the UNC School of Public Health. Submit your nomination to the School’s Speaker Selection Committee by contacting Jerry Salak at jerry_salak@unc.edu or 919-843-0661. The committee selects speakers for the Dean’s Lecture Series, Commencement, Foard Lecture and other special events.

Michael Neidorff, chairman and chief executive officer of the Centene Corp., a multi-line managed-care company based in St. Louis, lectured at the School on March 17, 2008. The presentation was the inaugural lecture of the School’s Distinguished Visitors Program and was titled “Academic Research to Practical Policy: Quality, Cost and Ethical Issues.” Centene provides Medicaid services and other specialty programs to health care organizations in seven states in the northeastern and southern United States. Neidorff has guided Centene to a leadership role in its field through marrying progressive business and quality improvement practices with cutting-edge health promotion and disease management programs to serve its clients.

Dr. Sheila Leatherman, research professor of health policy and administration at the UNC School of Public Health, spoke on “Microcredit and Global Health” at a Dean’s Lecture Series presentation on Sept. 24, 2007, at the School. Microcredit is a financial innovation that seeks to address the issue of global poverty. Small loans are extended to the impoverished or unemployed so they can build independent businesses. Leatherman is researching the impact of microcredit on global health.

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Dr. Robert Temple, director of the Office of Medical Policy in the Center for Drug Evaluation and Research at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, spoke at the School on March 6, 2008. His office is responsible for regulating the promotion of drugs and administration and potential efficiencies and active control trials, was sponsored by the UNC Center for Innovations in Clinical Trials and the School of Public Health.

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In Memoriam

Dr. Daniel A. Okun, UNC Kenan Distinguished University Professor Emeritus of environmental engineering, died Dec. 10, 2007, in Chapel Hill, N.C. He was 90.

Okun was hailed worldwide for his groundbreaking work in identifying pristine water sources, water management, water supply, pollution control, water reclamation and reuse, and watershed protection issues.

In 2006, he received lifetime achievement awards from Orange Water and Sewer Authority (OWASA) in Orange County, N.C., the national Environmental and Water Resources Institute and the International Water Association.

During his career, Okun worked in 89 countries and consulted with municipal and legislative planning committees throughout the United States. Among Okun’s many contributions, he helped design a water treatment plant in Bangkok, Thailand; establish a graduate program in sanitary engineering in Lima, Peru; and studied water supply and pollution control in China for the World Bank. At home in Chapel Hill, he led the campaign to build Cane Creek Dam and Reservoir in the 1980s to ensure the most pristine water source possible for Chapel Hill and UNC campus.

Okun began his career at UNC in 1952 and served as chair of the Department of Environmental Sciences and Engineering from 1955 to 1973. During his time as chair, the department grew from three to 25 faculty members. Although Okun retired from teaching in 1982, he remained actively involved in the profession through writing, lecturing and consulting, until his death.

“Dan Okun cared deeply about his school, his community, his state and his world,” says Dean Barbara K. Rimer. “And he turned that commitment into action, through water projects and social action. Few professors have influenced more students, more professionals, or more policy decisions around the world than Dr. Okun. His work has influenced international policy-making for organizations like the World Bank, United Nations and the World Health Organization. There is nowhere I go that people don’t talk about Dan with awe.”

Okun was also a generous donor to the UNC School of Public Health. Over the course of his career, he gave generously to the School’s Department of Environmental Sciences and Engineering, including funds to create the Dan Okun Scholarship Fund. This endowed scholarship is used to recruit and support promising master’s level environmental engineering students. In 2004, he also made donations to augment the Daniel A. Okun Distinguished Professorship in environmental sciences and engineering — an endowed professorship held by Dr. Philip C. Singer and established in 1999 by School faculty, students and alumni to honor Okun. Finally, in 2007, Okun made a gift to name the chair’s suite in the School’s Department of Environmental Sciences and Engineering.

Okun’s gifts to UNC were not limited to the School of Public Health. He also made significant gifts for the renovation of Memorial Hall and to the Sonja Haynes Stone Center for Black Culture and History.

Donations may be made to Okun’s endowment at the UNC School of Public Health Foundation, Inc.” referencing “H. A. Tyroler Scholarship” in the memo field. Mail gifts to UNC School of Public Health, P.O. Box 309, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514-0309. You may give online at www.sph.unc.edu/giving. For more information, contact Stephen Couch at (919) 966-0219 or stephen_couch@unc.edu.

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Michalak Commemorated for Selfless Service to Public Health

Craig L. Michalak, administrator of the North Carolina Local Health Agency Accreditation Program managed by the North Carolina Institute for Public Health (NCHIP) within the UNC School of Public Health, died on Aug. 20, 2007, after a valiant fight with leukemia. He was 59.

Michalak came to UNC in 2005, along with his wife, Sarah, a university librarian and associate provost for university libraries at UNC-Chapel Hill. With an MBA from the University of California at Los Angeles, administrative experience at the University of Utah and the University of California system, and several years in business, Michalak was a perfect fit to establish and administer the state’s first-ever local health agency accreditation program.

“Craig was a dear friend and a valued colleague,” says Dr. Edward Baker, NCHIP director. “So many of us benefited from his selfless service to public health in North Carolina and across the nation. Craig creatively built and managed the North Carolina Local Health Agency Accreditation Program, the first such program in the United States. The program he helped build will serve as a lasting legacy to his dedicated service, and it will stand as a model for others across the nation to emulate.”

Donations may be made in Michalak’s memory to a fund established in his honor by UNC Libraries. Please make checks out to “University Library,” and write “Craig Michalak Memorial Library Fund” in the memo field. Mail gifts to the Library Development Office, CB # 3900, UNC-Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514-8890. For more information, contact Sarah Potette at (919) 843-5660 or potette@email.unc.edu.

Dr. Al Tyroler, in a photo taken circa 1960s.

Dr. Daniel Okun, in a photo taken circa 1980s.
Dr. Daniel Okun, UNC Kenan Distinguished University Professor Emeritus of environmental engineering, died Dec. 10, 2007, in Chapel Hill, N.C. He was 90.

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