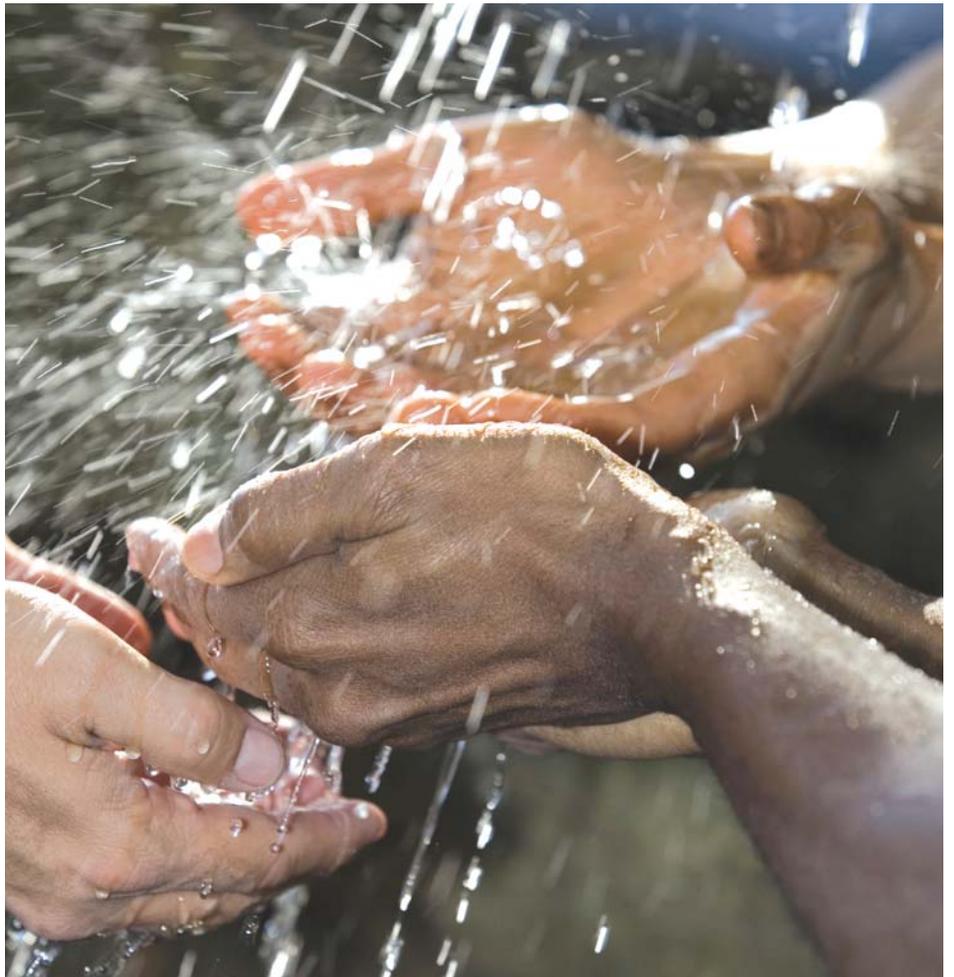
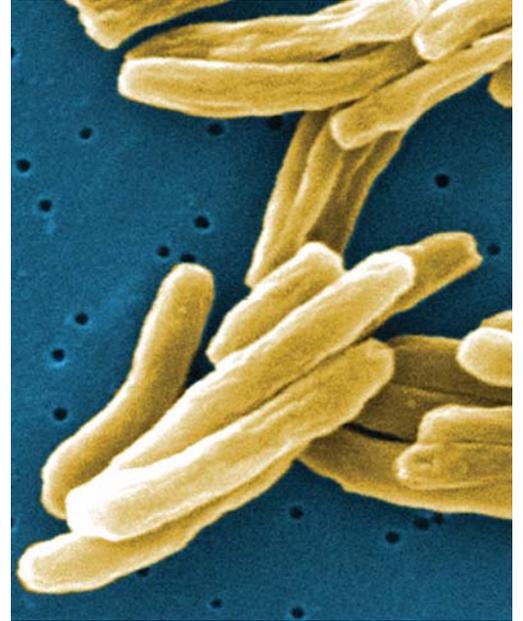


Anticipating Public Health Needs;



Accelerating

Public Health Solutions

The UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health is working with partners across North Carolina and around the world to develop new initiatives that will accelerate solutions to the daunting public health challenges of the 21st century.

“The health challenges we face today are ones that require interdisciplinary teams working together to solve,” says Julie MacMillan, MPH, managing director of Carolina Public Health Solutions (CPHS), an organization within the School’s Dean’s Office established to lead programs supported primarily by the gift from Dennis and Joan Gillings and other resources their gift may generate.

“Part of the mission of our initiative is to bring together leading public health experts from around the globe in academia, non-profits and the private sector to develop new capabilities that can make an impact on today’s critical public health problems,”

Dr. William Vizuete, assistant professor of environmental sciences and engineering, is leading a Gillings Innovation Lab that is using human lung tissue to examine the effects of toxic city air pollutants on human health.

explains MacMillan. CPHS is working with School faculty, students and staff as well as external researchers and leaders to collaboratively develop solutions to both emerging and intractable public health problems.

“The Dean’s Council and other School leadership are important advisers in the

selection of projects for funding,” MacMillan says. The CPHS Acceleration Advisory Committee—comprising experts in the fields of public health, government, policy-making, foundations, science, business and technology—brings additional perspectives, skills and expertise to help guide development of programs supported by the gift.

Some funds are being invested in endowment so the gift will keep funding public health research and education for generations to come. Other funds are being put to work right away. The majority of the money is earmarked for Gillings Innovation Labs, or “GILs”—competitively-selected projects focused on solving big public health problems. (See page 29.)

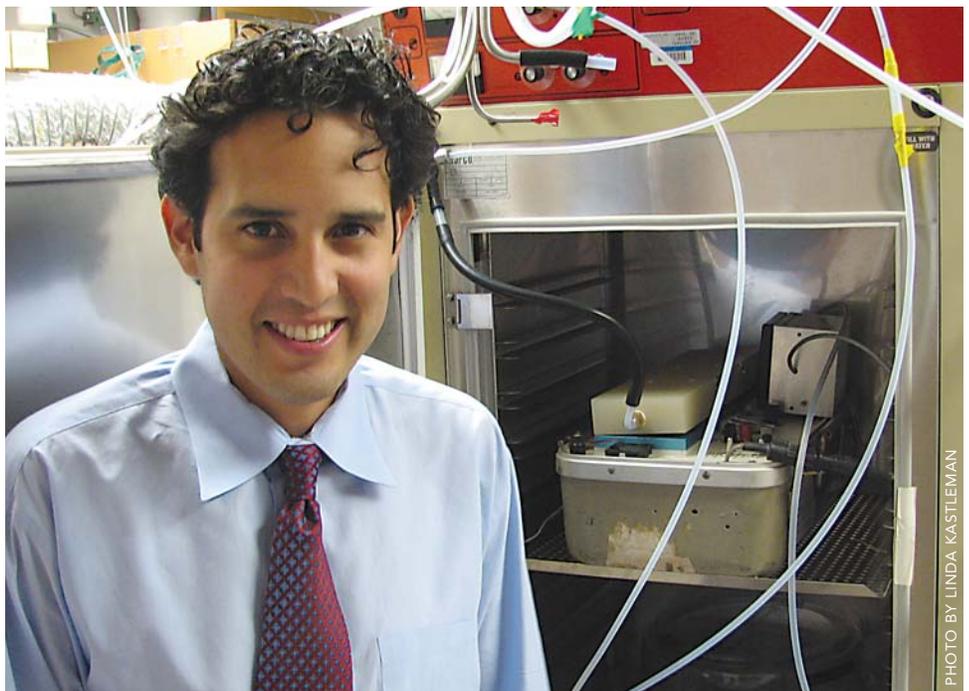


PHOTO BY LINDA KASTLEMAN

“Our project focuses both on health and on chemistry,” says Dr. William Vizuete, assistant professor of environmental sciences and engineering, who recently received GIL funding to study harmful pollutants created in city air. “Unless you have a review panel with the vision to understand the significance of both areas, then the project can be undervalued. The review panel for the Gillings Innovation Labs recognized not only the value on the chemistry side, but also on the health side, and had the vision to see how the two of these things can come together and produce something that’s better than the sum of its parts.”

Other initiatives funded through CPHS include:

- Gillings Visiting Professorships
- The Gillings Prize for Public Health Impact Award (still under development)
- And enhanced curricular innovations

Gillings Visiting Professorships (GVPs) enhance the School’s intellectual climate by exposing faculty, staff and students to alternative ways of thinking, new methodologies and different perspectives about public



Sheila Leatherman

health problems. UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health faculty may apply for these professorships, as may leading public health experts external to the School.

The first GVP was awarded to Sheila Leatherman, research professor of health policy and management at the School. Leatherman evaluates and analyzes health care systems around the globe. The GVP will support her and UNC’s efforts in microfinance and public health.



Dr. Thomas Ricketts

Dr. Thomas Ricketts, professor of health policy and management at the School, also was awarded a GVP. He is working with French researchers at the École des Hautes Études de



PHOTO BY LINDA KASTLEMAN

Kim de Bruijne, a doctoral student in environmental sciences and engineering, examines human lung cells through a microscope.

Santé Publique (EHESP) in France, to develop a new school of public health with campuses in Paris and Rennes. Ricketts will spend between 30 and 50 percent of his time on this project through September 2010.

in public health. In the coming months, our School will be inviting nominations for this new award.

Some curriculum enhancements also will be funded by the gift. “These will be relatively

Gillings Visiting Professorships enhance the School’s intellectual climate by exposing faculty, staff and students to alternative ways of thinking, new methodologies and different perspectives about public health problems.

During his two-year assignment, he will develop public health courses that can be adapted to the UNC context, create research and teaching opportunities for UNC faculty and develop a joint research conference involving EHESP and UNC faculty and students to share mutually useful research and analyses. Ricketts is director of the Policy Analysis Program at the UNC Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research.

Additional GVPs will be announced in the coming months.

Funding from the Gillings gift also will create the Gillings Prize for Public Health Impact—an international honor to recognize people who have made a substantial impact

small in practice,” says Senior Associate Dean Dave Potenziani, who leads the faculty committee developing changes, “but we hope they will have substantial benefits to students.”

The first change is to “globalize” the curriculum. Another change will be to ensure all UNC public health graduates emerge with critical, core financial skills they will need in their careers.

For more information on these and other initiatives, visit Carolina Public Health Solutions’ Web site at www.sph.unc.edu/accelerate. ■

—BY TORREY WASSERMAN,
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