

PHOTO BY LISA MARIE ALBERT



Dr. Barbara K. Rimer

Since the last issue of *Carolina Public Health*, much has changed – composition of Congress and our state legislature, political uprisings in the Middle East, earthquakes and a tsunami in Japan, and tornadoes and floods in the U.S. The global economy is improving in fits and starts. Revenue is up in North Carolina, but our state allocation for the School will be down. The number of student applications is up, as is the number of jobs our graduates are being offered. ■■■■■■

Events and information move faster, and we must keep up. Speed, innovation, adaptability, flexibility, permeability, sustainability and a lot of other abilities are needed to be effective 21st-century citizens and public health leaders.

The pace of traditional scientific discovery and dissemination is far too slow to solve big public health problems we face in a 21st-century world. Relying on traditional methods of dissemination through scientific journals can result in more than a decade for a proven program or concept to be translated into practice. Congress has made a cornerstone of the Affordable Care Act a mechanism to make cures available faster through changes in the structure of the National Institutes of Health.

We're trying different strategies to accelerate solutions so we can have an impact – faster. The gift from Dennis and Joan Gillings was an important part of that strategy. Gillings Innovation Laboratories are projects with high potential for public health impact through transformative solutions. Our Gillings Visiting Professors who come from non-academic

settings are helping us to think differently about problems. That can be game-changing. (We also are funding other exciting programs through the gift – see www.sph.unc.edu/accelerate.)

This issue of *Carolina Public Health* focuses on faculty, staff and students as they tackle some of the world's biggest problems, such as stopping smoking, getting clean water to people who need it, finding solutions to the obesity epidemic and reducing barriers to delivery of quality health care – in time to make a difference. Health risks and conditions don't exist in isolation from other issues in people's lives. Studying problems in real-world settings is messy and complex but important. The laboratory is the community, and solutions have a greater chance of sticking when they are developed with communities. Sticky ideas have greater sustainability.

We remain committed to undertaking research that has positive impact in North Carolina and around the world, translating that research into practice and policies, and training some of the best students anywhere to solve some of the world's biggest problems. We have faced many challenges over the last few years, but we are optimistic about the future. Thank you for your support of our School.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara K. Rimer". The signature is fluid and cursive.

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