

Warren Bennis, internationally renowned leadership scholar, said that *leadership is the capacity to transform vision into reality*.

That's a tall order and even more challenging than it sounds. First, there has to be a vision, and then one has to transform reality.

The first time I met Dennis Gillings, CEO of Quintiles Transnational Corp, it was obvious that he was a master at transforming vision into reality. Don Holzworth, former Constella CEO, has that ability. So do Leah Devlin (State Health Director and Director of the N.C. Division of Public Health), Carmen Hooker Odom (Former Secretary of the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services and now Milbank Memorial Fund President) and Bill Atkinson (CEO Wake Med). And they're not alone.

Leadership is a critical ingredient to improve health in the 21st century. Problems facing us are vast—huge disparities in the health of people across the U.S. and around the world, rising threats of infectious and chronic diseases, rising costs and plummeting resources, challenges of allocating new technologies so they benefit as many people as possible, and assuring that all people in the U.S. have access to health care. In today's world, we need strong leadership more than ever before.

While in the past, public health leaders may have focused primarily on the poor and disenfranchised, now we recognize that to achieve measurable improvements in community health, broader partnerships across sectors are needed—with religious organizations, businesses and a variety of non-government organizations. Public health must be broader, deeper and more inclusive.

Strong leaders I have known, like Dan Amos, AFLAC CEO, and Dr. Richard Klausner, former head of the National Cancer Institute, recognize that they must bring many people to the table to achieve their goals. That may mean new voices, such as businesses working with government or community representatives and advocates joining scientists. Future public health leaders will require greater reach, more partners and new funding models. New partners won't all look like us. They should represent the different domains needed to solve problems.

Strong leaders have clear ethical codes that guide them. They are willing to take tough stands on difficult issues. Dr. Dan Okun (Environmental Sciences and Engineering professor and former chair), Dr. Lucy Morgan (Health Behavior and

Health Education professor and former chair) and UNC President Emeritus Bill Friday were exemplars in this regard, forever enlightening Chapel Hill through their personal and professional stands against segregation. I am proud of Carolina's tradition in this regard.

It also is critical that leaders remember that we are not our jobs and offices. My father interacted with a lot of celebrities in his job at the American Cancer Society, but he never got carried away with a sense of his own importance. I like the adage that our friends are the ones we had before we were directors, presidents and deans. And our dogs love us no matter what! Leadership benefits from perspective.

Across our School, there are hundreds of examples of leadership—people who lead programs and departments, who see needs and act on them, who mobilize people, run organizations, and improve health.

I point to three examples of leadership—demonstrated by students. Carolina for Kibera, an organization devoted to improving the lives of people living in one of the world's worst slums, was started by Carolina students, including Kim Chapman Page, one of our own master's of public health alumni. Carolina for Kibera is a remarkable organization that has received worldwide recognition. This year, the Minority Student Caucus mounted the 29th annual Minority Health Conference, with more than 620 people attending. Janelle Armstrong-Brown and Eboni Taylor led the effort with incredible maturity. (Visit www.minority.unc.edu and see page 48.) Our Global Health Advisory Committee has mobilized people across the School and campus to focus on global health. In February 2008, they hosted the first global fashion show, raising more than \$3,000 for Honduran Health Alliance. (Visit www.sph.unc.edu/ogh.)

Leadership is a fundamental part of improving the public's health. It is our imperative. I am so impressed by the leaders this School has helped develop. Please read about some of them in the pages that follow. Together, let us transform the vision of a healthier world into reality.

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