



How the world learns

New methods and technologies transform the teacher's role in global education

The ways we access and use information have changed radically over the last decade.

Thanks to innovations such as social networking, micro-blogs and instantaneously loaded video, we can know about an event within moments of its happening, even if it happens on the other side of the world.

These dramatic advances in technology—and our increasingly easy and economical access to it—affect the ways we learn. For educators trying to stay one step ahead of

Google™, the challenges may seem to equal the potential. However, there is no longer a question of whether technology is essential to a teacher's toolkit. It is.

Innovative programs based in UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health's Department of Health Policy and Management and its Public Health Leadership Program are on the front lines of educating 21st-century learners.

"The rise of new technologies poses both profound challenges and opportunities for educators," says William Zelman, PhD, professor of health policy and management. "The teaching-learning hierarchy is quickly changing from an emphasis on teaching to an emphasis on learning—and how to incorporate technology into the process."

"Millennial" students—those born between 1977 and 1995—are the focus of Zelman's new Gillings Innovation Laboratory. His "Teaching and Training in Public Health for the 21st Century: Toward a Global Seamless

Classroom" examines issues related to curricula and engaging students in learning activities.

"Many millennials are multi-taskers," Zelman says. "They use the Internet for a variety of tasks, including for texting, e-mailing and participating in social media, many times a day. They demand activities that engage them, and incorporating information technologies is now an important part of curricular design."

Along with others, Zelman has developed a budgeting module designed to increase the financial literacy of budding public health practitioners.

The need for accessible and high-quality public health education has increased exponentially with the global increase in public health priorities.

"Current distance learning practices don't address the needs of public health practitioners around the world," says Rohit Ramaswamy, PhD, Gillings Visiting Associate Professor in the Public Health Leadership Program. "Many of the working public health professionals in developing countries have not had access to technology or information about best practices."

Ramaswamy's pilot program, "Leveraging Local Knowledge to Improve Public Health,"



Dr. Rohit Ramaswamy (left) meets with research assistant Kate Barker, MPH, and Dr. Hollie Pavlica.

(Left) Alumni Julie Golding and Ju-Yeon Park multi-tasked between classes last spring in the atrium.

is based on a series of collaborations. To develop the distance learning course for global public health competencies, he has worked with School faculty members William Sollecito, DrPH, Diane Calleson, PhD, and Louise Winstanly, LLB, MS, of the Public Health Leadership Program, who teach, and Eugenia Eng, DrPH, Allan Steckler, DrPH, and Laura Linnan, PhD, of the Department of Health Behavior and Health Education, who designed the curriculum.

Public health professionals in six learning units—three in Ethiopia and one each in India, South Sudan and Swaziland—have taken part in the pilot program. The units include people who work together routinely and face similar public health challenges.

“Our School has developed expertise in educating degree-program students in collaboration and knowledge sharing,” Ramaswamy says. “Although program participation does not result in an academic certificate or degree, the practice of public health is improved globally through participants’ common understanding of best practices.”

Another distance-learning endeavor, the Public Health Leadership Program’s new

online Certificate in Global Health, offers formal academic certification. Developed in partnership with the School’s Office of Global Health with Fogarty International Center American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds and a grant from the UNC General Administration, the certificate program includes courses in critical global health issues, ethics, infectious disease epidemiology, and monitoring and evaluation.

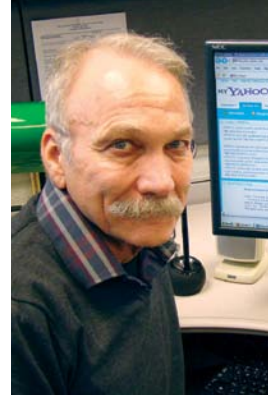
Like the innovative programs mentioned above, this new certificate program uses a collaborative learning approach so that global leaders and health practitioners can share knowledge with fellow program participants. As students live around the world, their experiences also will enrich the course.

“The Public Health Leadership Program has a long history of success in online leadership education,” says Hollie Pavlica, DrPH, clinical assistant professor in the program, “and we are uniquely positioned to meet the challenges faced by health leaders around the world.”

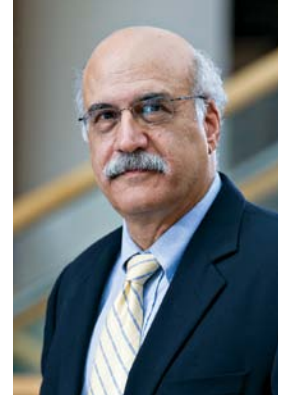
James Porto, PhD, clinical assistant professor and director of executive programs in health policy and management, teaches a class that tracks health care reform legislation. Students’ research, observations, questions and interactive Tweets are collected on a blog site, <http://hpm755unc.wordpress.com>, which serves as a news aggregator for the class.

“Ninety-five percent of management is decision making and problem solving,” Porto says. “This format (which involves students analyzing health care proposals and having their analyses critiqued) lends itself well to public health issues students will face in the real world.”

“It’s essential,” Porto says, “to be able to organize information. I see my role as that of a navigator through the many available resources.”



Dr. James Porto



Dr. William Zelman

The Executive Doctoral Program in Health Leadership, based in the Department of Health Policy and Management, prepares mid-career professionals for senior-level positions in organizations working around the world to improve the public’s health. The three-year, cohort-based distance program confers a Doctor of Public Health in health administration.

Students interact with faculty members and peers primarily online, using technology that supports live video, audio and data sharing.

One of the pinnacles of the School’s online global health efforts occurred in the executive leadership program on Jan. 21, 2010. The first international online dissertation proposal was defended successfully. It involved a student from Lebanon, faculty members from American University and St. Joseph’s University in Beirut, a faculty member in Paris, and two faculty members in Chapel Hill (Edward “Ned” Brooks, DrPH, and John Paul, PhD, clinical associate professors of health policy and management).

The world moves fast, but it’s getting smaller every day. ■

—Linda Kastleman

- Read more about Zelman’s Gillings Innovation Lab at www.sph.unc.edu/accelerate/gils/zelman.
- Read more about Ramaswamy’s Global Learning Program at www.sph.unc.edu/glp.
- Read more about the School’s Certificate in Global Health at www.sph.unc.edu/phlp/globalhealth. Applications for fall 2010 will be accepted until June 1.
- Read more about the online executive doctoral program in health leadership on the School’s Web site (www.sph.unc.edu/drph) and in the Spring 2006 issue of *Carolina Public Health* magazine (www.sph.unc.edu/cph/drph).

