

Morse names office in School's renovated Rosenau Hall

As a doctoral student majoring in environmental sciences and engineering at UNC-Chapel Hill, Stephen Morse spent most of his waking hours holed up in a laboratory on the second floor of Rosenau Hall. He studied there. He conducted his experiments there. He wrote his dissertation there. Many of the skills that he now uses to carry out his job as the second most senior person tasked to handle bioterrorism issues at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), he learned there.

"My time at the UNC School of Public Health exposed me to various aspects of public health, ranging from health administration to epidemiology to biostatistics," says Morse. "That type of broad exposure is very helpful when it comes to developing research agendas for the CDC."

Morse says he acquired his public health training at no cost through scholarships and stipends he received throughout the five years he spent as a graduate student. To express his gratitude, he has made it a point to make regular Annual Fund gifts to the UNC School of Public Health Foundation. This year, he increased his gift by pledging \$25,000, payable over five years, to improve the infrastructure of Rosenau Hall. In exchange, the School offered to name Morse's old laboratory, now an office, after him.

"I didn't really expect anything in exchange for the money, but someone suggested that the room be named after me," recalls Morse. "I have a lot of fond memories associated with that laboratory, so I said fine."

A former professor led Morse to the laboratory where he eventually devoted five years of his life. Morse took up microbiology at California State University in San Jose, with the intention of continuing on to medical school and becoming a doctor. Along the way, however, he realized that he was more interested in the research aspect of clinical practice. So when his thesis adviser, Dr. Robert A. Mah, accepted a teaching position at the UNC School of Public Health's Department of Environmental Sciences and Engineering in 1964, Morse followed. "Looking into the area of research and infectious diseases and its impact on public health interested me more," he says.

Before he came to the CDC, Morse was a professor of microbiology and infectious diseases at the Harvard School of Public Health and at Oregon Health Sciences University. In 1984, the CDC recruited him to direct their sexually transmitted disease research program. In 1998, Morse became deputy director of the bioterrorism program, and in February 2008, he became associate editor for environmental microbiology at the National Center for Preparedness, Detection and Control of Infectious Diseases at the CDC, which also deals with bioterrorism issues. ■



Dr. Stephen Morse

— BY MARGARITA DE PANÓ