

MPH MEMOS

University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Fall 2007

Issue 2

Dates to Remember:

- Oct. 15th: Registration for spring classes begins
- Oct. 25: Last day to register for Fall Hooding Ceremony
- Oct. 29-30: Council on Education for Public Health Campus Visit
- Nov. 1: Registration for April 26, 2008 CHES exam begins
- Nov. 9: MPH Comprehensive Exam
- Nov. 22-23: Thanksgiving Break
- Dec. 4: Last day of Classes
- Dec. 4: "Admission to Candidacy" forms for spring graduation due
- Dec. 6, 7, 10-13: Final Exams
- Dec. 14: Graduate Hooding Ceremony
- Jan. 9: Spring classes begin

Accreditation Update

On October 29 and 30, a Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) site visit team will be on campus to meet with constituents of the MPH program. The team members are: Cynthia M. Harris, PhD, DABT who serves as Director of the Institute of Public Health at Florida A & M University; Evan L. Thomas, MS, MPH, PhD, Director of Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Lab, Department of Energy; and Karon S. Harden, MS, CHES, Accreditation Specialist with the Council on Education for Public Health. Dr. Harris is chair of the site visit team and Ms. Harden is visit coordinator.

A primary objective of the team is to validate the accuracy of the information presented by the program self-study, which was developed over the past 18 months by the Public Health Academic Program Committee (PHAPC). Another important objective is to gather perceptions of the MPH program by conversing with a variety of constituents. The team will meet with alumni, students, faculty, department heads, college and university administrators, community representatives, field practice preceptors and the program governance committee (PHAPC).

Based on the program self-study, review of 42 on-site resource files and discussions with individuals and

groups affiliated with the MPH program, the site visit team will develop a written report of findings regarding the program's compliance with CEPH accreditation criteria. During late spring 2008, the CEPH Board of Councilors will decide the terms of an extension of national accreditation. Much has been accomplished by MPH faculty and students since the spring 2000 accreditation review and the members of the PHAPC are very optimistic that the outcome will be positive.

Alumni News:

Two alumni of the MPH program will be presenting their research at the annual meeting of the American Public Health Association in November in Washington, DC. **Julie Best**, MS-MPH, RD will be presenting on "Emergency Preparedness Assessment of Public Health Workers in the East Tennessee Region." This work was conducted in association with the East Tennessee Regional Health Office and after pilot-testing with Knox County Health Department. Julie worked on this project with **Dr. Betsy Haughton** of UT's Public Health Nutrition Program and **Dr. Paul Erwin**, MPH, who is now Professor and Founding Director of the UT Center for Public Health.

Alexa George, MPH, RD will present also at the American Public Health Association meeting. The title of her presentation is "Enumeration of the Public Health Nutrition Workforce." This USDA-funded census of the public health nutrition workforce was in collaboration with the Association of State and Territorial Public Health Nutrition Directors (ASTPHND). Co-authors of the presentation are **Susanne Gregory**, MPH, Executive Director of ASTPHND, and **Denise Ferris**, DrPH, RD, Director, Nutrition Services, West Virginia Bureau for Public Health.

Dr. Katie Portacci, MPH passed the certifying exam of the American College of Veterinary Preventive Medicine.

Share your news in MPH Memos! Let us know about your internship, presentations, conferences attended and projects. The next issue of **MPH Memos** is already in progress so contact me with your information at mfosters@utk.edu. Mary Foster-Smith, Graduate Teaching Associate, Editor, MPH Memos

Congratulations:

Kelly Melear-Hough, in her position at Rural Medical Services, designed a program to increase prenatal care access and education. The program enhances education and support services for Hispanic and high risk pregnant women. The project will fund a Perinatal Outreach Worker to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate prenatal education and case management and transportation to the clinic when needed. Kelly wrote a grant application to fund this program and was awarded a \$20,000 March of Dimes Tennessee Chapter Grant for 2007-2008. Kelly will continue to oversee and evaluate the program.

Kelly was also awarded a grant of \$40,000 by the Susan G. Komen for the Cure Foundation for a Rural Medical Services breast cancer education and outreach program to run from May 2007 to April 2008. The program targets women of all races between the ages of 40 and 49 who are uninsured and lack access to mammography services, or who have been diagnosed with breast cancer. The program will provide case management, referral and breast cancer education to these women as well as financial assistance in obtaining mammograms.

MPH Student Completes Internship in Uruguay

Carolina Crispino, who completed a medical degree in Uruguay in 2003 and is a student in the HPA concentration, returned to her home country this summer for the MPH internship. Her field placement was with the Latin American Center for Perinatology/Women, Maternal and Reproductive Health Unit, which is a technical specialized center for the Pan American Health Organization. She participated in an epidemiologic study to gain understanding of women's perception of their contraceptive needs. For data collection, focus groups and interviews of both patients and physicians were conducted.

Conversation with Dr. Paul Erwin:

Dr. Paul Erwin is the founding director of the Center for Public Health. The Center is in the College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences and its purpose is to strengthen the public health presence at UTK. When asked what he wanted students in the MPH program to know about the Center and himself, Dr. Erwin stated that while he is not actively teaching this semester his door is open and he is available to students and plans to be involved in teaching either by developing new courses or teaching existing courses. Currently he offers students the opportunity to attend meetings of county health councils with him. Students who wish to take advantage of this are able to interact with community members as they seek to address local health concerns. Other student involvement may involve interaction with the center and county health councils as part of coursework and internships within local county health departments. Dr. Erwin believes his contacts with communities in Tennessee will be beneficial to the Center and the MPH program.

Currently he is engaged in identifying faculty, courses, and programs at UTK that are public health related and plans to develop a campus-wide inventory of all public health related research. Dr. Erwin plans for the Center to expand collaboration with a number of colleges across campus and to encourage partnerships between the university and public health programs through teaching, research and service.

New Student Loan Legislation:

With the passage of the College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007, students in public health may get a break on repayment of student loans. Students with loans from the federal government may qualify to have the balances of those loans forgiven after 10 years of public service in areas such as public health. More details can be found at:

<http://articles.moneycentral.msn.com/collegeandfamily/cutcollegecosts/collegestudentsgetabreakoncosts.aspx>.

Discussion with Dr. Denise Bates:

Dr. Denise Bates, previously with Texas Woman's University, joined our department this semester as an assistant professor. She will teach PH 555 Health and Society this spring and summer semesters. She graciously agreed to answer a few questions to help MPH students get to know more about her and her work. Dr. Bates indicated that she is still getting acquainted with issues that are important in the community and learning about the area so her research plans are still flexible. However, one area she has identified as a probable area of research involves working with immigrant and refugee youth. She is interested in the interactions of youth, post traumatic stress disorder, violence, and decisions about high risk health behaviors. Her discussions with community members and agencies have highlighted youth susceptibility to engage in violence and risky behaviors as an area of need for the Knoxville community. She also anticipates conducting some evaluations of existing programs within the community. She envisions facilitating active student involvement in her research and encourages any students who have interest in this type of research to contact her.