Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health
Newsletter
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The mission of the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health (JPHCOPH) is to enhance health and eliminate health disparities of rural communities and underserved populations in Georgia and the southeastern region, the nation and the world through excellence in public health workforce development, research, professional service and community engagement.

A Message from the Dean

It is hard for me to believe that it has been one year since I took the dean's position at Georgia Southern University. My wife Rachel and I have met so many wonderful Statesboro people and our social calendar has been fuller than we ever could have expected. Between wonderful dinner conversations to attending musical and theatre events at the Performing Arts Center, we could not be happier. I am also thankful for the support I have been given by the other University deans and by the administration.

I could not possibly have hoped for a better faculty, staff and students than I have here at the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health. In my first months listening to faculty, staff and students to better learn what they expected of a dean, and what their needs and concerns are and have been, I learned that they want stronger faculty governance and more student and staff input into College initiatives. In response to this and to concerns from our accrediting agency, I initiated multiple efforts which included reorganizing the College by divisions, replacing discipline coordinators with Division Directors, and giving them similar responsibilities and authority as department chairs. I also established a Faculty Assembly that is run by the faculty and is intended to review and approve new College initiatives and provide more faculty development opportunities. In addition, I formed a leadership committee to advise me on policies and other activities of the College. I worked with the Public Health Student Association and the Dean's Student Advisory Committee to have students elected to all College committees except promotion and tenure.

I am currently working with staff and students to improve outreach to our alumni and to work with alumni to provide internships for our students. The school plans to hold several social events this year where students, alumni, faculty and staff can socialize in an informal setting. One of the events will be a multicultural evening where our international students can highlight aspects of their various cultures.

The College is working on increasing collaboration with other University institutes and departments, particularly with the Rural Health Research Institute (RHRI) and the Institute for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM). Our research and number of publications are increasing and we are in the process of hiring nine new faculty members who will contribute substantially to our research efforts and to providing the highest quality teaching to our students.

I am very pleased with all the efforts of staff and faculty to increase both enrollment and quality of students at the College. Indeed, the Fall 2012 enrollment numbers are up by 50 students over Fall 2011 (35%). Currently there are 65 DrPH students, 99 MPH students, and 21 MHA students. I anticipate that enrollment will continue to increase over the next few years, bringing even more opportunities for students, professors and the College as a whole.

I am extremely proud of all the members of our school for the hard work they have put into strengthening the College, and looking forward to continuing our work during the next several months.

Sincerely,

Dr. Gregory Evans, Dean
Investigating Georgia's Hurricane History

Georgian researchers Brian Bossak and Mark Welford are investigating Georgia's historical hurricane activity with the help of a $129,664 grant from the Georgia Sea Grant, which receives funding support from the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

The grant will fund two years of study by Jiann-Ping Hsu, Tedders and Dr. Raymona Lawrence will conduct a College of Public Health

The researchers revealed that NOAA's database on tropical storms in Georgia only dates back to 1853, and their research will expand the history to 1750. Preliminary data suggest the coast has historically experienced cycles of very high hurricane landfall activity, despite no major hurricanes hitting the state in recent decades. Their research could help explain the decreased number of Georgia hurricanes since 1850; in addition, it will generate information on the potential risks to the coast from major tropical storms in the future.

Georgia Southern University Professors Receive Community Health Needs Assessment Grant

Georgia Southern University professors have been awarded a grant to conduct a community health needs assessment and assist certain critical access and Prospective Payment System (PPS) small rural hospitals with the expense in meeting the requirements of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA). They will conduct health needs assessments for 18 critical access and small rural hospital communities as identified by the State Office of Rural Health (SORH).

"Community Health Assessment is essential to the practice of public health," said Stuart Tedders. "Specifically, it is a planned and systematic approach to profiling health needs and assets in a population. In order for key leaders and decision-makers in any community to initiate change, a comprehensive analysis of the population is the first step."

The Georgia Southern team will be organizing a steering group to provide assessment support and guidance; completing all community health needs assessments to include needs identification and asset inventory; prioritizing identified community health issues; and educating core steering group members and community members.

Georgia Public Health PBRN finds success

The Georgia Public Health Practice-Based Research Network (GA PBRN) has emerged as a national leader in researching and providing technical assistance for quality improvement in local public health systems. The Georgia Public Health PBRN Coordinating Center is working with four Georgia Health Districts to implement and evaluate Quality Improvement projects focused on improving health outcomes through a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant.

This collaboration is providing important insights for how Georgia's public health systems can continue to improve as public health challenges increase while resources become more scarce. Early reports of this work were recently published in the journal, Frontiers in Public Health Services and Systems Research in an article entitled, "Building Capacity to Support and Study QI in Local Georgia Public Health Systems."

Complementing this work on Quality Improvement, the Georgia PH PBRN received an 18 month technical assistance grant from the Healthcare Georgia Foundation to assist two Georgia public health districts with accreditation efforts through the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB). Accreditation of local health departments is a national standards-based assurance initiative to document the quality of services being provided by public health systems. With little or no additional resources, Georgia's local health departments will be challenged to meet the rigorous requirements of accreditation. The Georgia PH PBRN also worked with five Georgia public health districts in the past few months to complete accreditation readiness assessments, supported by a contract from the Georgia Department of Public Health, through an initiative of the CDC Office of State, Tribal, Local and Territorial Support. With this work on technical assistance and assessment of Quality Assurance, the Georgia PH PBRN has emerged as an important learning community for sharing developments on local public health accreditation and quality improvement. The Georgia PH PBRN will continue to work with the Georgia practice community to continue research and technical assistance in quality improvement, accreditation and cross-jurisdictional sharing as public health systems continue to be stressed and challenged.
**Rural Health Research Institute Awarded $5.1 Million Federal Grant**

The Center of Excellence grants are designed to allow universities to make significant advancements in rural health disparities research, and officially designates the University as a national leader in addressing burdens of disease in a specific group; the RHRI sought and received funding to address rural health issues.

**Georgia Southern University researchers** (in the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health and the College of Health and Human Sciences. “This is a significant moment in Georgia Southern University’s research history,” said Charles Patterson, Ph.D., vice president for research and economic development. “The efforts of Drs. Smalley and Warren are an example of the collaborative and interdisciplinary work being performed by the Rural Health Research Institute and demonstrate Georgia Southern’s identity as a leading research University.” NIH held a nationwide grant competition for the project, which involved a rigorous review and awarding process that lasted 16 months. The Center of Excellence grants are designed to allow universities to make significant progress toward eliminating disproportionate burdens of disease in a specific group; the RHRI sought and received funding to address rural health issues.

**Georgia Southern’s RHRI** is an interdisciplinary hub of rural health research and outreach that spans five Colleges within the University. Its mission is to improve health in rural areas by promoting cutting-edge, interdisciplinary research and outreach that connects faculty from diverse fields and promotes the development of researchers examining rural health issues. To learn more about the RHRI, visit: georgiasouthern.edu/RHRI

**Georgia Southern University** researchers (in the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health (JPHCOPH) are improving health outcomes for Hispanic women after receiving a $297,185 federal grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) titled “Salud es Vida (Health is Life): Reducing Access Barriers to Cervical Cancer Screening among Underserved Hispanic Women,” John (Juan) Luque, Ph.D., professor of community health in the JPHCOPH and his team are refining and testing a cervical cancer education program for underserved Hispanic women from migrant farmworker backgrounds, in an effort to fight cancer health disparities.

Luque and his team have also partnered with Georgia Health Sciences University’s Gynecological Cancer Prevention Center and Department of Medical Illustration, to produce a short educational video describing the procedure for a Pap test and pelvic exam. During the program, the promotoras will present the video and share information using a cervical cancer education toolkit, consisting of a flipchart and brochures. Luque’s team developed the toolkit in a previous NIH pilot grant, and he is hopeful that this efficacy study will add to the evidence base for how important a community health worker can be in making sure that underserved women receive routine, yet often lifesaving, Pap tests.”

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Luque is also evaluating a large cervical cancer screening initiative in Cusco, Peru.

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Dr. Talar Markossian named Exceptional Reviewer

Dr. Talar Markossian was named Exceptional Reviewer for The Journal of Rural Health for the period between July 2011 and June 2012. Dr. Markossian is an assistant professor of health policy and management. Academic journals rely on the unpaid work of professionals to select only the highest quality articles and advance the scholarly field. Exceptional reviewers were identified as being in approximately the top 10% of all JRH peer reviewers according to the frequency, quality, and timeliness of their reviews.

Dr. Renee Hotchkiss named to the Board of Directors

Dr. Renee Hotchkiss, assistant professor of health policy and management, has been appointed to the board of directors for the Hearts and Hands Clinic of Statesboro. The Clinic promotes healthy living and health education by providing free primary health services for Bulloch County citizens who are medically uninsured and have an income at or below 200% of the federal poverty guideline. The Clinic's purpose is not one of enabling, but to serve the community by providing support for individuals as they seek ways to better themselves. It describes its purpose this way: Together we take our hearts and use our hands to inspire by giving hope. "During these difficult economic times a large number of families and individuals find themselves without health insurance and earning very little income. I support a mission to enhance health and eliminate health disparities of rural communities and underserved populations in Georgia. I am well aware of the difference that clinics like the Hearts and Hands Clinic, Inc. can make in a rural community," says Hotchkiss.

For more information on the Hearts and Hands Clinic, Inc, please visit: theheartsandhandsclinic.com

Estimation of Odds Ratio

Collaborative work including Dr. Hani Samawi provides estimation of the odds ratio between two independent groups using two types of Moving Extreme Ranked Set Sampling (MERSS). Theoretical properties of the suggested estimator are derived and compared with its counterpart estimator using simple random sampling (SRS). It is found that the estimator based on MERSS is always valid and has some advantages over that based on SRS. Real data from a level I Trauma center are used to illustrate the procedures developed in this paper.

The odds ratio is widely used in medical, social, behavioral and public health sciences. In fact the odds ratio is equally valid for retrospective, prospective and cross-sectional sampling designs. The odds ratio is the ratio of the odds of an event occurring in one group to the odds occurring in another group.

Interorganizational Sharing

A collaborative study including Dr. Guizar Shah examines "The Extent of Interorganizational Resource Sharing among Local Health Departments: The Association with Organizational Characteristics and Institutional Factors." Resource sharing, arrangements between local health departments (LHDs) for joint programs or to share staff, is a growing occurrence. The post-9/11 influx of federal funding and new public health preparedness responsibilities dramatically increased the occurrence of these inter-LHD relationships, and several states have pursued more intrastate collaboration.

Results of the study suggest that about one-half of all LHDs are engaged in resource sharing. The extent of sharing was lower for those serving larger populations, with city jurisdictions, or of larger size. Sharing was more extensive for state-governed LHDs, those covering multiple jurisdictions, states with centralized governance and in instances of financial constraint.
Center for Addiction Recovery travels to West Africa

During the summer of 2012, Emily Eisenhart, the director of the Center for Addiction Recovery (C.A.R.), traveled with two enrolled collegiate recovery students to Ghana in West Africa to work with Ghanaian non-profit organizations that are providing substance abuse treatment and recovery resources to individuals in need.

"Ghana has just enough social and economic development to have a major drug and alcohol problem but not enough development to be able to provide resources for those suffering with the diseases of alcoholism and addiction. Data we collected last summer revealed that substance abuse is rampant but goes largely unaddressed," Eisenhart said.

The team met up with students and faculty from Texas Tech University’s Center for the Study of Addiction and Recovery in what marked the very first collegiate recovery study abroad. For the three weeks the team was there, they were able to distribute boxes full of culturally appropriate recovery materials, to speak at area secondary schools bringing awareness to addiction and to work one-on-one with persons suffering from substance-use disorders.

Overcoming Addiction: A Student's Journey

Following in the footsteps of her parents, grandmother and two great-aunts, Catherine Mosley is the third generation in her family to attend Georgia Southern University. However, her journey to the Statesboro campus is much different from that of her father, Ronald Mosley (’82), her mother, Carol Jordan (’83) and grandmother Elizabeth Smith Jordan (’47).

Three years ago, Mosley was in legal hot water after she was charged with forging prescriptions for a synthetic opiate or pain reliever she first started taking in high school to ease the pain of her migraine headaches. The University junior also abused alcohol, which made the headaches worse. Eventually, she developed a dependency on the prescribed drug that came in the form of a nasal spray. "I first started taking it to relieve the pain. Then I took more, for more frequent pain. And then I took it because of the feeling it gave me," Mosley said. "I felt all warm and fuzzy with no cares or worries, and if I didn’t have it, I would drink."

Following a 2009 arrest, she sought outpatient treatment in her hometown of Savannah, Ga., and soon relapsed. After a second arrest, Mosley entered rehab at Willingway Hospital in Statesboro, Ga. "I went to get out of legal trouble because I didn’t think I had a drug problem," she said. She stayed for seven weeks, and then moved to Willingway’s extended treatment facility for 13 more months of recovery. In April 2011, Mosley moved to a halfway house and said that is when something clicked. "The halfway house was a safety net. I had coping skills and decided to throw life into the mix," she noted. Mosley wanted to go back to school but still faced a pending felony charge.

During her time in treatment, Mosley learned about the recovery program at Armstrong Atlantic University because I didn’t think I could get into Georgia Southern," said Mosley. "The Center’s director, Emily Eisenhart, was so amazing. I would get so overwhelmed, go into her office and fall apart. She was so patient and loving. It’s cool to have a place on campus where I can meet with people in my own circumstance."

Now that she is three years into her sobriety, Mosley is taking steps to get her record cleared or expunged. The chemistry major is also following her parents into the scientific field as well, and hasn’t ruled out medical school once she earns a master’s degree in chemistry, public health or epidemiology. When asked what she likes most about Georgia Southern, Mosley didn’t hesitate. "It’s not too big and not too small. I feel like this is where I was meant to be."
Student Travel Opportunities

MHIRT
The Minority Health International Research Training Program (MHIRT) is a program that is funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). It provides both graduate and undergraduate minority students the opportunity to study abroad to receive research training in such countries as Italy, Germany, Portugal and Thailand. Natalie Williams, a recent M.P.H. graduate, went to Thailand for two-and-a-half months with this program. While there, she was involved in two research projects. The first project was about diabetes and depression which included structured interviews with the local villagers, with the help of translators and the nurses at the village health clinic. The second project was about teenage pregnancy, in which Williams interviewed two pregnant teenagers to gain their perspectives. From her background knowledge, Williams was able to provide some education on birth control methods available to teenagers in Thailand.

Williams stated, "I was able use the education and training I received during my graduate assistantship to conduct research abroad and discover that I had a real passion for helping others and trying to improve overall health. I was able to effectively conduct interviews and data analysis on the data that was collected, and in turn write an article that is being revised for publication. I was able to work with a multidisciplinary team to offer health education and gain a global perspective on public health, and better understand other health care systems. The training and education I received in the College, along with the study abroad experience helped prepare me for my future career and I look forward to seeing what the future holds for me."

APHA
The American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Meeting & Exposition is the oldest and largest gathering of public health professionals in the world, attracting more than 13,000 national and international physicians, administrators, nurses, educators, researchers, epidemiologists and related health specialists. Natasha Lambert, one of many students receiving a travel grant from the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health, attended the APHA annual meeting, says, "attending the Annual Public Health Association meeting in San Francisco offered me the opportunity to enhance my knowledge, exchange information on best practices and learn about current research stimulating throughout the realm of public health. In addition, attending the APHA annual meeting has endowed me with keen insight to prevent illness and to promote wellness across the lifespan. I will share the experiences I have been privileged to obtain within my social group. Not only will sharing my experiences enlighten other people, but it will provide me with feedback to see how non-public health professionals conceptualize ideas."

BASS XIX held in Savannah
The Nineteenth Annual Biopharmaceutical Applied Statistics Symposium (BASS XIX) was held at the Mullbery Inn Suites in Savannah, Ga. The program consisted of 18 tutorials, a keynote address and three 2-day short courses by leading experts from academia, government and industry. The theme of BASS XIX was Safety Assessment of Pharmaceutical Products. The Symposium provides (1) a forum for pharmaceutical and medical researchers and regulators to share timely information concerning the application of biostatistics in pharmaceutical environments; and (2) funding to support graduate studies in Biostatistics. BASS was founded in 1994, by Dr. Karl E. Peace, Fellow of the American Statistical Association and the Georgia Cancer Coalition Distinguished Scholar/Scientist, and professor of biostatistics in the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health (JPHCOPH). BASS is regarded as one of the premier conferences in the world. Since 1994, more than 300 tutorials and 50 1-day or 2-day short courses have been presented at BASS, by the world's leading authorities on applications of biostatistical methods attendant to the research, clinical development and regulation of biopharmaceutical products. Presenters and attendees represent the biopharmaceutical industry, academia and government, particularly the NIH and FDA.

Funding was provided for biostatistics students to attend three different BASS courses: (1) Monte Carlo Clinical Trial Simulations for Pharmaceutical Industry: Concepts, Algorithms, Implementation and Case Studies by Mark Chang, Sandeep Memon and Chereghe Doros; (2) Data Safety Monitoring Boards: Planning and Execution by Janet Wittes, Ruth McBride, April Slei and Matt Downs; and (3) Advanced Safety Data Analysis and Handling Nonrandom Missing Data using SAS by Russ Wohlinger, Richard Zinc and Craig Malindikit. While students lauded "plenty of opportunities to meet very high profile people from pharmaceutical companies," they especially emphasized skills gained from working with data and new JMP software. The courses were described as "new and unique information about some clinical trials topics like design and development;" as well as "helpful for us to learn how to prevent and treat missing data in the true world."

In referencing fellow students, a BASS attendee stated that students "must attend these kinds of conferences to achieve a highly successful career as public health professionals." Without the nearly $12,000 in funding from Dr. Peace and JPHCOPH, these students would not have been able to attend these courses taught by the world's leading authorities on the presented topics. A total of 13 M.P.H. and Dr.P.H. students in Biostatistics from JPHCOPH, two students pursuing the M.S. from Mathematical Sciences at Georgia Southern and three students pursuing the Ph.D. in biostatistics from VCU School of Medicine attended.

Dr. Greg Evans, dean of JPHCOPH, commented: "Being able to attend BASS courses is a unique advantage to students pursuing biostatistics degrees at JPHCOPH, one that is not easily available to biostatistics students from other Schools or Colleges of Public Health."
JPHCOPH Examines Building Capacity to Support Local Public Health Systems

A collaborative study, including Dr. William Livingood, Dr. Nandi Marshall, Ms. Angela Peden, Dr. Guizar Shah, Mr. Russ Toal, Ms. Kellie Penta, Ms. Dayna Alexander and Dr. Lynn Woodhouse from JPHCOPH, along with Ms. Ketty Gonzalez of East Central Health District, Ms. Kay Davis of the Southeast Health District, Dr. Sylvester Nixon of the Coastal Health District, Ms. Purity Cummings of the East Central Health District and Dr. William Riley of the University of Minnesota, looked to build capacity to support and study quality improvement in local Georgia public health systems.

The study of quality improvement (QI) within Georgia's local public health systems provides important insight into the use of regional bodies as QI collaborators and multi-jurisdictional entities. This report describes QI initiatives following a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funded quick strike research grant to assess health district capacity to conduct QI in Georgia's local public health systems. These QI initiatives use QI to improve public health outcomes, including adolescent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection prevention, HIV prevention and control and HIV Management.

Student Examines Health Insurance Coverage

Doctoral student Linda Ekperi found that increasing percentages of diabetics had no insurance. Diabetic whites were more likely to be covered by private programs than diabetic blacks. Hispanics were the group falling through the cracks between private programs due to low income and government programs because of immigration status. The lack of adequate health insurance may result in a downward spiral of the diabetic condition, imposing an increased financial strain on the family and society as a whole.

The coauthors of this report, published in the fall issue of Ethnicity and Disease, include Shamola Greene, Dr. Ahmed Dehal and Dr. Jian Zhang from the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health and Dr. Ana Lopez of Institute for Families in Society at the University of South Carolina.

Joseph Lowry, MPH 2012

"The coursework I took at JPHCOPH, which included coursework in SAS and GIS, as well as Research Methods and Biostatistics, provided me with a solid analytical foundation. In addition, my experience as a graduate assistant for Dr. Stuart Tedders provided an opportunity to gain hands-on experience working with all aspects of surveys and survey based data. There were a number of opportunities to attend conferences and present research; from international and national conferences such as SER and APHA, to local conferences such as the GRHA annual conference. Volunteer opportunities, such as the CHANGES project run by Drs. Jacob Warren and Bryant Smalley, provided a unique and up close perspective of the health issues faced by those living in rural Georgia communities."

"In my new position I am responsible for designing and performing epidemiologic studies and analyzing trends and patterns of cancer mortality and morbidity throughout the state of Florida. A solid understanding of research methods and the ability to generate statistical information in SAS are essential, as well as the ability to work well with others in a team environment. The diverse experiences I had through JPHCOPH have prepared me well for my current position with the Florida Department of Health."

Megan Drake, MHA 2011

Megan chose the Master of Health Administration program at JPHCOPH because of the small, intimate class sizes and the ability to create solid and lasting relationships, not only with peers and colleagues, but also with faculty and staff thanks to the inclusive nature of the College. The M.H.A. program prepared her to enter the health care field with a strong knowledge base and ability to apply that knowledge in a variety of health care environments. She is currently living in Naples, Fl., and working as a cancer specialist.
Georgia Southern University

Georgia Southern University, a Carnegie Doctoral/Research University founded in 1906, offers 125 degree programs serving more than 20,500 students. Through eight colleges, the University offers bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programs built on more than a century of academic achievement. Georgia Southern is recognized for its student-centered approach to education and is a top choice of Georgia's HOPE scholars.

GeorgiaSouthern.edu

Jiann-Ping Hsu

The Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health is named in honor of Dr. Jiann-Ping Hsu, a scholar-scientist whose distinguished service in her life's work and devotion to quality and caring in all her endeavors represent the touchstones of learning and leadership in the health professions. The Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health is endowed by Dr. Karl E. Peace as a tribute to his wife and an enduring celebration of her life characterized by "a zeal for excellence, consideration of others, intelligence and scholarship, honesty, kindness and humility." Dr. Peace is an alumnus of Georgia Southern College, a Georgia Cancer Coalition Distinguished Cancer Scholar, the architect of the MPH in Biostatistics, and the founder of the Karl E. Peace Center for Biostatistics at Georgia Southern University.

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