

Northwest PUBLIC HEALTH

From the Dean

Expanding the School's Scope of Service



The second issue of *Northwest Public Health* continues our efforts to showcase the scope of public health issues in this region. In articles on topics ranging from the impact of legislative decisions to the health effects of local drought and global climate change, we see the variety of the challenges before us and the significant role public health plays in addressing them.

Now that I have visited the 34 local health jurisdictions in Washington, I have a much better sense of the public health problems in this state and of the needs of the practice community. There are common themes across jurisdictions as well as situations that are unique to specific areas. Many so-called big city problems— drugs, immigrant populations, multicultural communications, violence, reemerging infectious diseases— are now found throughout rural communities that are also struggling to deal with more traditional concerns such as water quality and food safety. The one characteristic the health jurisdictions all share, however, is commitment to their communities. I have been extremely impressed with the dedication of the public health workforce in Washington, a dedication I am sure is shared by the public health workforce in the other Northwest states. My journey around the state has been an inspiring one.

At the same time that we have been strengthening our regional focus, the School is moving forward on several other fronts, one of which is our global health initiative. The School's Strategic Plan identified global health as an area in which we have much strength but little visibility. Our first step has been to develop a Web-based survey to gather information on our faculty's extensive international activities. Eventually, the survey may be used campus-wide, but our main goals are to enhance our coordination of School-wide international efforts and to develop our interdisciplinary potential in this increasingly important arena.


Another initiative being undertaken by the School again highlights the diversity of public health. We are working to create a novel response to challenges posed by the converging fields of genomics, biostatistics, bioinformatics, and computational biology. The rapid development of new technologies in genomics and proteomics has produced an unprecedented need for new biostatistical approaches to experimental design and data analysis. Biostatisticians are becoming increasingly indispensable collaborators in the design and interpretation of studies such as gene expression array experiments. Key faculty in our departments of Biostatistics, Environmental Health, and Pathobiology will explore collaborative research with partners on and off campus as we move forward to meet a growing demand for analyses of increasingly complex data.

Again guided by our Strategic Plan, the School is making progress with offerings for undergraduates and in developing a community-oriented, practice-based MPH track. We have revised and enhanced the public health minor, creating a broader and more flexible program designed to appeal to a greater number of

undergraduate students. A new option for undergraduates is available through Arts and Sciences-a General Studies degree with an emphasis in public health. The practice-oriented MPH degree is intended to offer a comprehensive yet more integrated approach to public health, which we trust will have a favorable effect on the public health workforce in the Northwest in years to come.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *Northwest Public Health*. The School of Public Health and Community Medicine is pleased to be a partner in bringing this publication to the region. It is only one of the many ways we seek to inform and collaborate with colleagues in public health throughout the Northwest.

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