What’s Inside

Department Updates
MPH Department Chair briefs us on the semester’s activities and provides a window into upcoming events.

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Students showcase their experiences, interests, career goals, & engagement activities.

MPH GPSI Highlights
MPH students excel in UIS Graduate Public Service Internship (GPSI) Program.

Speaker Series
UIS MPH Speaker Series events afford students, faculty, and practitioners the opportunity to hear from experts in the field about the latest developments in public health practice.

Upcoming Events
A recognition ceremony is to be held for graduating students the evening of Friday May 12th (PAC Restaurant, 5-7pm).
Dr. Josiah Alamu

Department Updates

By Dr. Josiah Alamu

Dear Friends,

I am very pleased to write my second “Chair’s Update.” We are currently working with the University administration to restructure our existing MPH program into two distinct, autonomous programs – MPH General and MPH Environmental Health programs. Our reasoning is that we wish to take advantage of designating the MPH Environmental Health program as a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) program. The STEM programs carry a special benefit for our international students. The STEM designation provides students on F-1 visa, the opportunity to apply for an extension of the Optional Practice Training (OPT) after graduation. Upon approval, the new MPH Environmental Health program will be assigned a CIP code of 51.2202.

In the past few months, we have collaborated with the communities and institutions within the Springfield area to promote important public health interventions. During the week of December 2016, the MPH Public Health Students’ Club participated in World AIDS Awareness Day on campus. We also collaborated with the Illinois Department of Public Health’s (IDPH) Office of Minority Health and the NAACP to screen a movie titled “Thicker than Blood.” The movie was used to dispel myths and increase awareness and knowledge surrounding HIV, homophobia, and stigmatization.

Furthermore, our Department and the Illinois Public Health Association co-sponsored a speaker series event on campus that brought eminent public health practitioners to campus – Conny Moody, Gina Lathan, and Dr. Nirav D. Shah, Director of IDPH. Dr. Shah delivered a high impact closing for the series entitled “The Vision for State Health and the Decision-Making Process in Prioritizing Issues.” We are continuing our partnership with IDPH and IPHA with in-class projects including helping the IPHA develop a public health student engagement initiative. This initiative will give MPH students across Illinois an opportunity to connect with county health departments to work on various projects. Also, students are completing the Illinois Hepatitis B Epidemiological Profile which compiles essential data to assist IDPH in decision making processes.

Finally, the department will host a recognition graduation party for May 2017 graduating students. At the party, we will give awards to two Outstanding MPH Students, the Marshall, and an awardee of the 2017 MidAmerica Healthcare Executive Forum.

All the best and please stay in touch.

Josiah Alamu, Ph.D., M.P.H.
Associate Professor and Chair
Emilie Lohman Irwin is an on campus student pursuing a Master's in Public Health-General concentration at University of Illinois Springfield; working towards completion of her program in May 2017. She currently serves as a Graduate Research Assistant in the UIS Survey Research Office. Her motivation to enroll in the Public Health program at UIS is to bridge the gap between her prior experiences in state government, where she served as a Dunn Fellow in the Illinois Governor’s Office of Management and Budget, and her interest in healthcare. As a graduate student in the Public Health program, Emilie enjoys the variety of courses offered because they enable her to increase her knowledge in diverse areas such as environmental health and public health policy. In addition, the variety of elective courses fulfills her interests and expands her knowledge in various areas of public health. Also, the flexibility of course offerings and options provided by the program in terms of course choice allowed Emilie to tailor her degree to the areas that interest her most. Emilie has a goal to pursue a career in the medical field and work to address disparities in the healthcare system, using the skills gained from her MPH coursework and experiences at UIS.

“The variety of elective course options to choose fulfills my interests and expands my knowledge in areas like epidemiology.” - Emilie Lohman Irwin

MPH Student Spotlight

Public Health at its Best!
Student Engagement Activities

The Public Health Department is highly committed to the academic success of its students and embraces initiatives that improve student success. In light of this, the faculty uses different approaches in teaching and learning to expose students to diverse learning styles and keep them engaged throughout the process. Student presentations, classroom activities, site visits, and course projects are some of the many engagement activities our students are exposed to in the MPH program.

Student presentations. Presentations by students prepare them for the public speaking and leadership roles they will be undertaking as professionals in the public health field upon graduation. Student presentations improve students’ confidence and help students to gain insights into the topics they present from their research.

Classroom activities. Classroom activities vary for every class. However, the important thing is that students are able to engage in application and experiential activities to connect theory with practice. An example is the MPH 561 (on campus): Community Health Education class where community outreach activities are practiced prior to going to the field as pictured above. This contributes to the synthesis of course materials and a better understanding of public health topics. Opportunities for student interaction and group engagement that reflect real world public health experiences abound.

Site visits. To compliment course materials, field trips are also incorporated into student learning. This provides an opportunity for students to witness policy in the making. Such an event was a part of the MPH 531 (Public Health Policy & Administration) class where students visited the Illinois State Capitol. Students were introduced to the legislative process; they attended General Assembly sessions, bill hearings, and appropriations committee meetings to experience real life public health policy enactment.

Course projects. In addition, students are engaged in scholarly research activities that add to existing knowledge. Students work independently or in groups to research and report their findings in documents, posters, and presentations. Acquisition of research skills is important for any public health career path.
I found the Public Health program at UIS very suitable, with a well-rounded curriculum that provides the flexible schedule that my home and work require.

I look forward to furthering this type of real world education and graduating with a quality degree from UIS.

Brian Stennett is an online student, currently in his second semester pursuing the MPH general concentration, and advanced graduate certificates in Epidemiology, Emergency Preparedness and Homeland Security at UIS. "I was looking for a program that was reputable, affordable and flexible that would also have the area of focus that I was looking for; the Public Health program at UIS was a perfect fit for that".

Brian works full-time as a firefighter and paramedic in the northwest suburbs of Chicago. In his job at the fire department, he sits on the Health and Safety Committee and also serves as the department Infection Control Officer. Key among his duties are tracking occupational injuries and exposures. His office is working toward developing a better way to track data and improve safety of firefighters.

The need to develop a better educational background for managing infection control among first responders motivated Brian to pursue a Master of Public Health degree that would prepare him for applying epidemiology to occupational injury assessment and further his expertise in the area of emergency services. He found the Public Health program at UIS very suitable, with a well-rounded curriculum that provides the flexible schedule that his home and work require.

He finds the 12 credits per semester course load challenging, but manageable and not overwhelming as long as time is appropriately invested. In addition, he feels pleasantly surprised that much of the curriculum meshes very well with his previous work experience, and this enables him to easily apply learned concepts to the real world.

Brian is currently working on a project for MPH 561, Community Health Education, to develop a hearing loss prevention program for his fire department. This program will not only serve the needs of the class project, but has been approved for implementation at his fire department upon completion. "I look forward to furthering this type of real world education and graduating with a quality degree from UIS".

Apply Today! Click here or scan the QR code.
Congratulations to Marleigh Voigtmann!

Marleigh Voigtmann, a Graduate Public Service Internship (GPSI) Program intern with the Illinois Department of Public Health, was honored as the recipient of the 2017 Brian T. Milbrandt Memorial Intern Award for Excellence. She is a graduate student in the Master of Public Health (MPH) program and was one of eight students nominated. Marleigh is shown on the left with Ms. Janet Nuss, her internship supervisor who is the coordinator for Illinois HIV Planing Group.

Marleigh believes that being a GPSI intern has been an exceptional learning and working experience. The internship allowed her to apply MPH course work in meaningful and practical ways. Moreover, she has been able to practice MPH core competencies. The combination of in-class lessons and hands-on applications during the internship has prepared her to become a confident, diligent, and compassionate public health professional. “I will forever be grateful for the opportunities granted to me by the UIS GPSI program, the UIS MPH Department, and my mentor Janet,” says Marleigh Voigtmann.

“The combination of in-class lessons and hands-on applications during my internship has prepared me to become a confident, diligent, & compassionate public health professional.”

- Marleigh Voigtmann
High acceptance rate of GPSI program and graduate assistantship in MPH students

More than 80% of on-campus MPH students have been selected as Graduate Public Service Internship Program interns or Graduate Assistants. As GPSI interns, students receive financial support while engaged in internship experiences that are compatible with the students’ academic background, graduate majors, and skills.

Excellence in UIS-sponsored internship programs among MPH students

Our MPH students have won the Brian T. Milbrandt Memorial Intern Award three consecutive years (2015 - 2017). MPH students receive strong support from MPH faculty and their GPSI supervisors. Students’ academic and career development successes are a result of their hard work and talent.

“GPSI not only helps pay for your MPH degree, but also provides the opportunity to integrate the academic classroom with real world learning. Make a SMART investment in your future here!”

Apply MPH Program!

Click here or scan the QR code
Speaker Series

By Dr. Kristin Osiecki

With the UIS campus situated in the capitol of Illinois, it allows faculty to partner with public health associations and agencies to enhance the student learning experience. This semester, the public health department invited numerous public health professionals from both the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and the Illinois Public Health Association (IPHA) to speak to students. In a campus-wide event, IDPH Director Shah presented on prioritizing public health issues in Illinois.

Students learned about the challenges of identifying issues that are harmful, illegal or both and how measuring risk is important in the decision-making process. Students participated in a question and answer session that gave them an opportunity to discuss topics important to them. In addition to this event, public health professionals have been invited to present on a variety of issues in the classroom including: health inequities, health policy and health promotion.

Students are learning first-hand about the practical applications of public health and discovering potential career paths that they can pursue after completing their degree or certificate.

Upcoming Events

Friday May 12th 2017, PAC Restaurant, 5:00-7:00PM Recognition Ceremony for Graduates.
Our Lovely Faculty Members

Engaging and supportive online and on campus learning environments

Dr. Brian Chen

Our program prepares students with analytical skills, cultural competence, scientific knowledge & an understanding of social justice necessary for practicing the core functions of public health: assessment, policy development, and assurance.

Community service and learning, and research opportunities abound

Dr. Kristin Osiecki

We build public health capacity through instruction and service to the university, profession and community. We also work within the teacher-scholar model focusing on translating research into evidence-based public health practice.

Commitment to ensuring a welcome & respectful environment

Dr. Egbe Egiebor

Our faculty members and students work toward social justice to improve health equity and eliminate disparities through a diverse public health workforce represented by faculty and student diversity.

“Together, we build school-community partnerships to advance student learning!”

Dr. Kathy DeBarr

Lenore Killam

Dr. Dorine Brand
How to Apply

First, you will apply for admission to University of Illinois Springfield at [http://go.uis.edu/admission](http://go.uis.edu/admission). On your application, please indicate your interest in the MPH program.

In addition to the University application, students need to submit a separate application to the Master of Public Health program. The application forms are provided as fillable Microsoft Word Forms at [http://go.uis.edu/APPLYNOW](http://go.uis.edu/APPLYNOW).

Connect with Us

For more information about studying here, connect with us! We look forward to meeting you and becoming part of your social network.

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This edition of the newsletter was prepared by Metta Kongira, Graduate Assistant, and Dr. Brian Chen from the Department of Public Health at University of Illinois Springfield (UIS).