From the Director

Spring is a hectic time on any college campus, but it is worth pausing for a moment to reflect on the year’s accomplishments—and by that I mean student accomplishments. Johns Hopkins Public Health Studies students are truly remarkable.

When I returned to Hopkins last summer to run this program, I knew I would be working with extremely bright students who would excel academically. I knew that many would enter graduate programs or pursue careers in medicine after graduation. Today, as the school year ends, what strikes me is how well-rounded PHS students are. Their pursuits outside the classroom are just as notable as their academic accomplishments. They are talented artists, championship athletes, world travelers, and ROTC cadets. Many are deeply committed to community service.

There are also a number of students who choose to spend their spare time on more scholarly endeavors (this is Johns Hopkins after all). I am talking about the Public Health Studies student groups. These students work hard all year—the Epidemic Proportions staff gathering and editing articles for the undergraduate public health journal, the Public Health Student Forum organizing an undergraduate public health research conference, and the Scholar Bowl team preparing for competition. Spring brings the culmination of all of these efforts, and it is impressive! This issue of the Newsletter is a salute to our amazing students.

Maria Bulzacchelli
PHS Director

Student Research Highlights

Undergraduate Conference in Public Health

The Public Health Student Forum held its 8th Annual Undergraduate Conference in Public Health on April 8th. The event, which was planned and run entirely by students, featured a keynote address by Dr. Joshua Sharfstein, Associate Dean for Public Health Training and Practice at JHSPH and Director of the Bloomberg American Health Initiative. Public health professionals from city and state agencies, as well as local businesses and non-profit organizations, participated in round-table discussions over lunch, and 12 students presented their research at the event.

Twenty-eight PHS students presented their work at the Day of Undergraduate Research in Engineering, the Arts & Humanities, Medicine, and the Sciences (DREAMS) event on April 21st. This event, organized by the new Hopkins Office of Undergraduate Research, brought together undergraduates from across the Homewood campus to share their work.

Jonathan Martinez ’17 (above) presents his project, “Exploring the Association Between Personal Vehicle Access and Dietary Habits and Food Insecurity Among Public Housing Residents”

Victoria Buckman ’17 (left) presents her project, “Women’s Empowerment and Institutionalized Childbirth in Ghana: A Look at the Impact of Household Decision-Making on Place of Delivery”

Saachi Nangia ’17 (left) presents her project, “The Cross-Contamination of Polluted Air from Stove Use Among Households in Rural Puno, Peru”

Ashley Park ’17 (right) presents her project, “The Lay Health Educator Program: Evaluating the Impact on Graduates”
PHS Scholar Bowl Team Wins Second Place. PHS students competed against 11 other teams from across the country in the Public Health Scholar Bowl hosted by Saint Louis University on April 1st. The travel team, consisting of John DeBella ’17, Zaya Angaabaatar ’18, Anjie Ge ’18, Poonam Gupta ’18, Sara Kang ’17, Navya Ravoori ’18, Hirsh Shekhar ’18, and Anna Yang ’19, won second place in the Quiz Bowl portion of the competition.

Epidemic Proportions 2017 issue is published. Epidemic Proportions, the undergraduate public health research journal, is entirely student run. The theme of this year’s issue is “compassion in every corner.” Highlights include an account of a month spent volunteering at a refugee camp in Greece by Jia Yao Kuek ’19, an exploration of the types of foods sold in corner stores in West Baltimore by Ivory Loh ’18, and articles examining the past and future of the U.S. healthcare system by Vijay Ramasamy ’19 and Keerthi Harish ’19. Read this issue and past issues on the Epidemic Proportions website.

Dr. Katie Henry, PHS Advisor, has been awarded a Teaching Innovation Grant from the Center for Educational Resources to develop a public health biology course using case studies to illustrate the public health relevance of basic biological concepts. The course will be offered for the first time in Spring 2018.

Gordis Teaching Fellowship call for applications. Up to ten doctoral students from JHSPH will be supported to teach undergraduate public health courses in 2018. This year, a new teaching fellowship has been made possible through generous funding from the Center for Africana Studies to support a course on public health issues in Africa or populations descended from Africa. Information and application forms for both fellowships are posted on the PHS website. Applications are due September 15th.

Applied Experience Highlight

Ilan Rich, PHS Class of 2018, writes: For the past year I have been working as a statistical consultant at the Truth Initiative in Washington D.C. The Truth Initiative is an anti-tobacco non-profit that conducts research and markets to adolescents and young adults to encourage nicotine cessation. A chance encounter on a delayed flight home allowed me to form a connection with the executive director of the research arm of the initiative. He was gracious enough to invite me to D.C. where I met with other researchers and was given the opportunity to assist with their work tracking and predicting youth tobacco habits. A primary goal of the research is to learn more information about e-cigarettes and their use among adolescents and young adults. I did not have any experience in tobacco research and little programing experience, but their patience allowed me to learn a lot about statistical coding and the public health work that is being conducted to decrease cigarette use. Within a couple of months I was going into their D.C. office and leading meetings with other analysts and PhDs. Though I have been working remotely as a consultant they have hired me full time for the upcoming summer. In addition, the work we have been conducting has been accepted for a poster presentation at the Joint Statistical Methods (JSM) conference that is being held in Baltimore this summer.