Dear Friends of Public Health,

As the end of the spring semester approaches, we are happy to share our 5th issue of the “The Update.” Many exciting things have happened, and our students continue to shine.

The Our Campus, Our Health research team, led by Professor Julie Merten, actively continues to collect and analyze UNF student health behavior data. As part of the undergraduate Community Health team, 3 students, Emily Bosco, Alexa Cocker, and Ginger Leavel, presented a research poster at the American Academy of Health Behavior annual meeting in Charleston, SC. We are so proud of this group’s many accomplishments!

Through Florida Blue Foundation funding, 5 students were selected as Community Health Scholars: Matthew Brandenburg, Emily Bosco, Johnelyn Cadang, Cyndia Estime, and Ginger Leavel. They each dedicated over 100 hours with a community agency addressing important health related initiatives. Agencies included Healthy Start, First Coast Worksite Wellness Council, Mayor’s Council on Fitness and Well Being, Healthy Jacksonville, and Jacksonville Community Council, Inc. Their work will be showcased at our Spring 2014 Internship Poster Session.

Since becoming an “Engaged Department” through the UNF Center for Community-Based Learning, our program identified Karen Coleman as our community consultant. Karen has successfully helped develop strategies to encourage community based learning for our students as well as identify ways students can gain more real-world experience. Through this initiative, our department also hosted Community Engagement training for our adjuncts.

The Master of Public Health (MPH) program completed a successful site visit with the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) for program reaccreditation. Thank you to all of you who participated and supported our program during this important time!

We continue to be grateful to our Advisory Board who provide us with meaningful guidance, and to our Eta Sigma Gamma student group led by Dr. Emma Apatu and Jamie Diersing. Their leadership and active involvement at UNF and in the Jacksonville community is much appreciated!

Great things are happening among the faculty. Dr. Emma Apatu was awarded a UNF International Travel grant to establish a study abroad trip to Geneva, Switzerland for the summer of 2015, including a visit to the World Health Organization. Professor Julie Merten was appointed to chair the Northeast Florida Cancer Control Collaborative Sun Safety Task Force. Drs. Elissa Barr and Michele Moore recently participated in the Youth Risk Behavior 2013 data release event as part of their work with this research team to promote the health of Duval County middle and high school students. Dr. Kerry Clark was promoted to Full Professor.

Finally, if you are interested in having a UNF intern at your health organization, please contact Julie Merten, Faculty Internship Coordinator for the Community Health Program (jmerten@unf.edu) and/ or Michele Moore, Faculty Internship Coordinator for the MPH Program (mmoore@unf.edu). Interns are placed every semester.

Thank you for taking the time to read The Update! We hope that this newsletter continues to build connections between our program, students, alumni and our regional community health partners.

Healthy Wishes,
Dr. Elissa Barr
Program Director Community Health Program
(ebarr@unf.edu)

Dr. Michele Moore
Program Director MPH Program
(mmoore@unf.edu)
Graduate Alumni Corner

After graduating with a Bachelor’s degree in Biochemistry, from the University of Lagos, a South Nigerian University, a career in the medical field would have been a traditional path for Chukwuemeka “Emeka” Okafor. However, growing up in Nigeria and experiencing first-hand the burden of disease and disability in the society and realizing the impact of public health strategies in mitigating this burden spurred his interest in Public Health.

In fall 2010, he enrolled in the Master of Public Health (MPH) program at UNF. “My experience with the faculty, the administration and my colleagues at the UNF MPH program was absolutely amazing,” says Emeka. “I found that the faculty were very interested in hearing about my career goals. They integrated my interests into the educational experience so that the course work aligned with these goals. Certainly, I am indebted to the UNF MPH faculty for their advice toward my decision to pursue further study.”

Presently, Emeka is working on completing his PhD in Epidemiology at the University of Florida. His research interests focus on the impact of substance use (specifically alcohol and marijuana) on immune system activation, inflammation and neurocognitive functioning in persons living with HIV infection. He is also currently involved in the project “WHAT-IF [Will having Alcohol Treatment Improve my Functioning?], an ongoing, randomized clinical trial that aims to determine whether a pharmacotherapy (Naltrexone) can help women with HIV infection reduce their drinking and improve their overall quality of life. In addition, he is a member of the Southern HIV and Alcohol Research Consortium (SHARC), an NIH funded project that focuses on the impact of alcohol and aging on inflammatory processes and clinical outcomes in people living with HIV infection. "I am confident that my training in the field of substance use and its outcomes will place me in a strategic position to contribute significantly to improving the quality of life of, not only persons with HIV, but also disadvantage persons in the society."

Undergraduate Alumni Corner

Eric McClure earned his BSH degree with a Minor in Health Education and Professional Education from UNF August 2013. Going to college was difficult at times, but he was passionate about health education so he persevered. “Going into the Spring 2013 Pre-Internship class, I had no idea what area I wanted to focus on. With the tools provided in that class and with Professor Merten always being willing to listen to my fears about going into the ‘real world,’ I was able to focus my talents and skills in one direction,” says Eric.

Eric landed an internship with the UF/IFAS Duval County Extension Office. “I had never heard of the extension office, but when I went for my interview and learned more about what they do for our local communities, I was hooked!”

During his internship, Eric was able to experience the different areas of extension. His main duties were to help with the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) teaching a nutrition/wellness curriculum (Eating Smart, Being Active) to low-income county residents. Eric was able to educate and change the behaviors of participants one-on-one. He also helped with presentations to educate the community about bed bugs. Eric went into schools and spoke with children about what to do if they found them. He even got the honor of wearing the bed bug costume for a presentation!

Near the end of his internship, Eric was offered a position as an EFNEP Program Assistant and he gladly accepted. He now works with individuals and families in need who want to learn how to prepare low-cost meals on a budget. He teaches about nutrition, physical activity, and other important skills like comparison shopping and food safety. Since graduating, Eric has earned his Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES), National Nutritional Certification Program (NNCP), and ServSafe certifications. He is enrolling in Florida State University to earn a Graduate Certificate in Emergency Management. “Knowledge is power and it is through that power that we have the opportunity to listen, help, and try to make positive changes in our local, national, and global communities.”
Faculty Spotlight

Dr. Elissa Barr was born and raised in central Illinois. She completed a BS in Health Studies from Eastern Illinois University and an MS in Community Health from Southern Illinois University. She received her PhD in Health Behavior from the University of Florida with a minor in Research Methodology and a concentration in Sexuality Education. Since joining UNF in 2003, Dr. Barr has taught both graduate and undergraduate courses in sexuality education and program planning. She has served as the Community Health Program Director since 2005.

Dr. Barr’s research focuses on the need and support for evidence-based sexuality programs to reduce risky sexual behaviors among youth. Her work addresses policy and advocacy at the state and national levels to improve the scope and delivery of quality sexuality education programs. She believes her work will empower youth to make informed decisions while improving their well being.

Dr. Barr works closely with the Florida Department of Education as a sexuality education specialist developing and delivering statewide programs to include Parent Communication, STDs and HIV, Teen Pregnancy Prevention, and Evidence-Based Sexuality Programs. She is currently chairing Florida’s Exemplary Sexual Health Education Team leading 10 members state-wide in identifying, developing and facilitating evidence-based sexuality education. Most recently she is a part of the “Future of Sex Ed” Initiative, a national undertaking to improve sexuality education and access to care.

In her spare time, Dr. Barr enjoys spending time with her family, photography, and the outdoors. When asked what she likes best about UNF, she replied, “I have great colleagues and we enjoy teaching students about topics that truly matter. UNF is a positive environment that allows faculty to have balance between teaching, research and service.”

Eta Sigma Gamma (ESG) News & Notes

ESG has been extremely busy this past Spring preparing for “Relay for Life.” Despite the event having to end early due to maintenance issues, the ESG Team raised $796 for the American Cancer Society. Congratulations to Stacy Willis, for personally fundraising $430 dollars. Special thanks to everyone who braved the rain and helped raise money for this great cause!

ESG also conducted monthly tabling sessions with a new health topic every month and prepared for the Brooks College of Health Olympics. Thank you to everyone who signed up for the Team. Our program would have dominated if the event had not been cancelled due to rain!

Currently, ESG is determining the members of the Executive Board for the 2014-2015 School Year. Congratulations to the graduating officers: Shannon Casebeer, President and LaToya Hurt, Secretary! Thank you both for serving as officers for the last two years. You will be greatly missed. Good luck in your future endeavors.

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Beyond the Classroom... Student Involvement & Accomplishments

Community Health Students:

- **Cyndia Estime** has been selected as a UNF Florida Blue Community Health Scholar working with Healthy Jacksonville to plan for the 3rd Annual Food Summit focusing on changing current food policies and improving access to healthy foods for the community as a whole.

- **Christopher Hunter** was selected by Advocates For Youth to work on two national sexual health SafeSites projects: 1) the Spring 2014 Great American Condom Campaign, a project encouraging sexually active youth to use condoms; and 2) #DontbTriched, a project encouraging sexually active youth to be tested for trichomoniasis.

- **Aniqa Qureshi**, Office Director at Smith Endodontics, established an office wellness center that includes weights and a yoga room. Aniqa also conducts educational sessions about wellness, incorporating nutrition and stress management techniques like taking breaks and bringing nature (plants, fish, etc.) into the office setting.

- **Manasia Javius** and **Christopher Hunter** have distributed over 500 condoms on the UNF campus as part of the Advocates for Youth, Amplify project.

Master of Public Health Students:

- **Margalo Eden** volunteers once a week with cognitively impaired seniors in a Memory Enhancement Project through the St. Johns County Council on Aging.

- **Echo Osland** volunteers on a telephone helpline at the Wounded Warrior Project. She works in a pilot program, WWP Talk, designed to help veterans work through emotional struggles associated with their time in combat.

- **Courtney Ellis, Maxwell Schmidt** and **Roselyn Whitley** won FIRST place in the Original Research category at the BCH Graduate Student Research Symposium! That makes three years in a row that a group from the MPH program won first place.

- **Newly Hired!**
  - **Elizabeth Cavallaro** is the Suicide Prevention Program Coordinator/Trainer at Appalachian State University in Boone, NC
  - **Kristen Delamater** is the Tobacco Program Manager for the Volusia County Health Department
  - **Jennifer Richards** is the Bariatric Program Coordinator for St. Mary’s Medical Center/Palm Beach Children’s Hospital in West Palm Beach, FL.
  - **Rebecca Severin** is a Community Health Advocate for Baptist Hospitals

Thinking about going back to school for your MPH? Kiplinger calls it one of the top 5 graduate degrees to get! Visit us at: [http://www.unf.edu/brooks/public_health/mp.aspx](http://www.unf.edu/brooks/public_health/mp.aspx)

Or contact Dr. Michele Moore, MPH Program Director at mmoore@unf.edu.