



Public Health Connections

Southern Connecticut State University
School of Health and Human Services

Department of Public Health

A Message from the Chair Dr. Jean Breny

Pivoting During a Public Health Crisis: When change is thrust upon us

Greetings to you as we wind down another year! Perhaps, this year will not be so hard to let go of as we see ourselves still in the midst of a pandemic that has turned our world inside out. Weeks into the COVID19 pandemic, the head spinning rush of change hasn't stopped and, daily, there are new challenges, staggering numbers of cases and deaths, and constant stress about not knowing what the next day will bring.

Reflecting on these past weeks, disparities and privilege have been underscored as we began living a "new normal" life. The privileges of having a job that allows you to work from home, of having the access and means for your kids to seamlessly learn at home, and the ability to order and pay for groceries and other essentials to be delivered. Social distancing, itself, is a privilege not shared equally by all, and certainly not by all of our students or even faculty. As heart wrenching as these inequities are, they are not new, as Arundhati Roy wrote, "It is the wreckage of a train that has been careening down the track for years."¹

Our priority has been to make sure everyone in our community had access to continue to work and learn and live as best as they could during this enormous time of uncertainty. It was abundantly clear that everyone was not going to weather this storm equitably. Uncertainty remains, however I see hope as we practice these essential commitments in health promotion and public health practice: 1) start where the people are; find out what others are experiencing as it may not be the same as yours; 2) cultivate a culture of collaboration and mutual trust, 3) employ effective and accessible communication channels, and 4) allow everyone to have the space and time they need to adapt to the change and succeed in their own way.

For all of us, whether we are students, researchers, practitioners, leaders, academics or some combination; we are public health professionals and we know the science of and messaging for pandemics. We know how to help our communities get through to the other side of this, and all of you are doing that in your own way! This issue of Public Health Connections highlights some of the COVID19 work members of our community have been doing, and we will continue to highlight this work through our social media channels. Our time is now – the Department of Public Health at SCSU has never been stronger or more committed to the health of our communities – and we are grateful for all that you do!

¹Roy, Arundhati (2020). The pandemic is a portal. Financial Times, April 3, 2020.



In This Edition

#MaskUp Campaign

Giving Back

Faculty News

Social Media

Student News

Calendar





SCSU Public Health #MaskUp Campaign

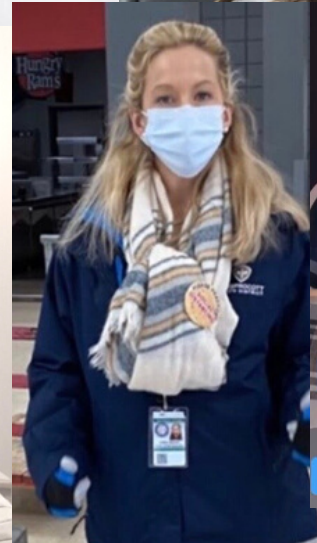
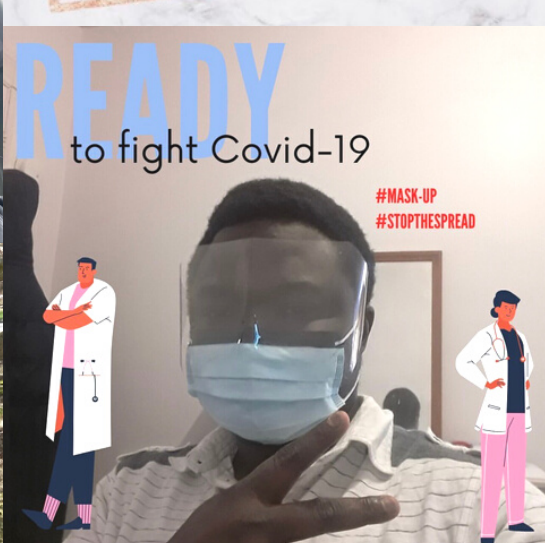
In April, Graduate Assistant **Avery Gartman** launched the Department of Public Health #MaskUp campaign on Facebook and Instagram.

“Our goal was to raise awareness about the CDC's updated guidelines regarding mask use. Many people feel isolated and afraid. We wanted to set an example and show others that we are with them and that we are doing what we can to remain safe and positive! We also want to extend a special **thank you** and support to those who are on the front line, fighting COVID-19. #MaskUp“. -Avery Gartman

#maskup



#maskup



Looking for a way to support your community during the COVID-19 Pandemic? Please consider donating time, money, blood or plasma during this time of need.



**United Way
of Greater New Haven**

The United Way of Greater New Haven is maintaining a list of volunteer opportunities during the Coronavirus pandemic. They are experiencing an urgent need for short-term volunteers to assist with a variety of tasks including packing and delivering food to community members, dropping off meals to shelters, and sewing masks. For more information and to review their list [click here](#)

BLAKE FIELD DROP-IN CENTER

**COVID-19
VOLUNTEERS
NEEDED**

Sign up at bit.ly/blakefieldvolunteer

Help support those experiencing homelessness in New Haven during COVID-19 at this temporary drop-in center.

Services provided:

- Medical and mental health services
- Lunch
- Showers and clothing
- Triage and case management

Volunteer Needs:

- Check-in
- Food Support
- Shower Support

Hours: Mon-Fri 12:30-4:00
Location: Blake Field (Willow St & Mitchell Dr)

Volunteers Needed for Blake Field Drop-in

Support people experiencing homelessness during the COVID-19 Pandemic by volunteering at the City of New Haven's Blake Field Drop-In Center. The drop-in center, located at Blake Field (next to East Rock Magnet School), will provide food, showers, clothing, medical and mental health services, and triage/case management. The center will be open Monday through Friday, 12:30-4:00 PM. To sign up [click here](#)



The Connecticut Food Bank has added additional mobile food pantry stops throughout the state. They are experiencing increased demand and usage during the pandemic. In the next 6 months, they will need an additional \$7.8 million to provide food assistance to people facing hunger in Connecticut. To donate [click here](#).



The American Red Cross is experiencing a severe blood shortage due to the pandemic. Please consider donating blood or plasma in your community. To find a location where you can donate [click here](#).

**Life's most persistent and urgent question is,
what are you doing for others?**

-Martin Luther King, Jr.





Teaching and Learning on Zoom "Make it Work" - Dr. Deb Risicky

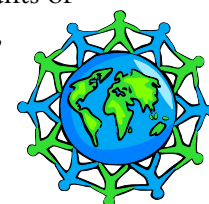
Teaching on Zoom... what an experience! I admit that online teaching was new to me – except for some snow day recordings over PowerPoint, I have stayed in the classroom where I enjoy building community and having discussions. My two classes, Program Planning and Introduction to Health Promotion, stayed synchronous. I worried students wouldn't want to do that, but emails and a final survey showed they liked having the structure and schedule.

Program Planning students were close. Amidst the shared-screen lectures, we used the chat for discussions – and running group jokes. Regularly, one would start something and many would jump in. Another student worked hard to find a different virtual backgrounds for Zoom to keep us guessing and entertained. When my audio went out, someone would tell me “Robot Professor” was back. Intro presented a different challenge. We were about to move into a few weeks of equity talk, and that often spurs great discussions on racism, wealth equity and more. They stayed with it, talking openly. When I learned how to do breakouts and said they could go back to their small groups they had formed in the actual classroom, they were so excited! We still had our guests come in and I could add guests from around the country to pop in and share their work, which they really enjoyed.

Overall, it was a huge learning experience! I recorded all classes and now have my own YouTube channel so those sick with Covid-19 or having to work in healthcare facilities wouldn't miss class when they couldn't be with us. As I told them when it all started, we were going to follow the great philosopher (and Project Runway Judge) Tim Gunn and “Make it Work!”.

New Graduate Elective Course

According to the World Health Organization's Global Health and Aging report the proportion to total world population of adults 65 years old will increase from 8% in 2010 to 16% (1.5 billion) in 2030. Today, there are significantly more people 65 years old or older than children 5 years of age and younger. Mobility impairment and falls, dementia, cardiovascular disease, cancer, obesity and diabetes are likely to be the health concerns of an aging population. To familiarize students with this landmark demographic change, **Dr. Christine Unson** is offering an elective graduate course in Global Health and Aging this summer. The course will cover aging population, social and ecological determinants of successful aging, risk factors and measurement of physical and cognitive functioning, depression, loneliness, frailty, falls, elder abuse, caregiving, and quality of life. Students will analyze (using elementary statistics and SPSS) WHO international data sets. For more information, contact Dr. Christine Unson (unsonc1@southernct.edu).





Stacy Abrams Receives the SOPHE Honorary Fellow Award

On Monday, February 24th, **Dr. Jean Breny** traveled to Atlanta, Georgia to present Ms. Stacey Abrams with the 2020 SOPHE Honorary Fellow Award at the headquarters of her organization, Fair Fight. Accompanied by President-Elect Dr. Cam Escoffery and SOPHE CEO Elaine Auld, the award was presented to Stacey Abrams for her important work in voter rights and advancing health equity. We spent some time with Ms. Abrams talking about the emerging COVID19 pandemic, having it just begun to make an impact in the Pacific Northwest and the importance of proactive and informed leadership to help us navigate through it. Her videotaped acceptance of the award can be found [here](#).

The Department of Public Health Welcomes Two New Faculty for Fall 2020



Dr. Griswold has a background in maternal-child and pediatric nursing and in public health advocacy and policy. She is a founding member and former Chair of the Connecticut Breastfeeding Coalition and the Immediate Past President of the International Lactation Consultant Association, where she assisted in overseeing the organization's relationships with global health entities such as WHO, UNICEF and the United Nations. In this role, she advocated for equitable access to breastfeeding and lactation care as well as family friendly policies to support breastfeeding. Dr. Griswold's research interests involve the identification of unjust social barriers to breastfeeding and understanding how implicit biases of health care professionals contribute to poor health outcomes for marginalized populations. Dr. Griswold has an MPH from SCSU and a PhD in Nursing from the University of Massachusetts Medical School, Graduate School of Nursing.



Dr. Anuli Njoku earned her Bachelor of Science in Public Health from Rutgers University, Master of Public Health with a concentration in International Health from Boston University, and Doctor of Public Health degree with a concentration in Community Health and Prevention from Drexel University. She also has postdoctoral training in Psychosocial and Behavioral Medicine from Fox Chase Cancer Center. Her academic and research training have focused primarily on community-based health promotion and disease prevention efforts at the local, regional and international levels. Her research and teaching specialties include cultural competency in higher education, health disparities, health promotion and education, environmental health equity, and rural health. Her experience in the field includes having developed and taught several postgraduate courses, and having published on learner-centered curriculum development in Public Health, promoting health disparities awareness among Public Health students, and academic-community partnerships to promote rural health.

Breastfeeding Experience Among Women Living With HIV in High Income Countries



Dr. Michele Griswold, PhD, MPH, RN, IBCLC recently published the results of a literature review entitled "Women Living With HIV in High Income Countries and the Deeper Meaning of Breastfeeding Avoidance: A Metasynthesis." The paper was published in the *Journal of Human Lactation* as part of a special issue on ethics in lactation care. Dr. Griswold will present this paper and preliminary results of a qualitative study investigating the experiences of infant feeding among women living with HIV at the annual meeting of the International Lactation Consultant Association in August 2020.

Third Study on Caregiving of Older Adults Published

Drs. Deborah Flynn and Christine Unson, along Queendaleen Chukwurah, MPH graduate and Tulane University PhD candidate, Drs. Mary Ann Glendon (SCSU, Nursing Dept.) and Tammy Testut (Sacred Heart University, Nursing Dept.) published a study entitled "Uncertainty in Transition of African American Caregivers" in March 2020 issue of *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*. This article is the third study published by Drs. Unson, Flynn and Glendon. In June 2015, the three authors, along with Dr. Elayne Haymes, and Diane Sancho published "Dementia and Caregiver Stress: An Application of the Reconceptualized Uncertainty in Illness Theory", also in *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*. A year later, the same five authors published "Predictors of Types of Caregiver Burden" in *Social Work in Mental Health*.

Student Thesis Focus on Aging and Social Media for Health

Nwanyieze Ngozi Jiakeponnah wrote her thesis on predictors of intention to undertake strength and balance training (SBT) for fall prevention among older adults. She used the Protection Motivation Theory's threat appraisal construct (fear of falling and fear of pain due to movement), Theory of Planned Behavior constructs, knowledge of SBT as the main predictors of intention to undertake SBT and number of days of strength and balance exercises. **Sumit Sharma's** thesis uses the Precede Model to organize predictors of health services use of older adults. He is analyzing the 2016 Health and Retirement Study. Some of his predictors include number of co-morbidities, health insurance, social support, quality of life, health perceptions, probabilities of living a long life, demographic and socio-economic factors.

This coming academic year for her thesis, **Ellen Twum** will study socialization to caregiving process among young adults in general and among West African immigrants, in particular. She will work as a graduate assistant with Dr. Christine Unson who was awarded a Graduate Student Assistantship (GSGA). **Rebekah McKee's** mixed methods study on caregiving of family members examined caregiver burden. Her determinants included the level of disability of the care recipient as well as demographic characteristics. On a different vein, **Ese Freeman Oghaghare** examined sexual education apps' content quality by rating them on range of characteristics such as visual appeal, quality of information. He also evaluated the apps on their ability to promote behavior change via knowledge, setting of goals and plans, and providing feedback and monitoring. He first applied exclusion and inclusion criteria to 1500 android apps and ended up with 9 which he analyzed using the full range of criteria relating to content quality and ability to promote behavior change.





Public Health Society Spring Update

Public Health Society started the semester off strong, promoting condoms they received from Advocates for Youth's Great American Condom Campaign. They sponsored a program called Condoms From Cupid in the ASC Food Court, with a table filled with educational games, prizes, and snacks for the many visitors that came by. The club was almost done planning their nutritional program with a basketball theme (for March Madness) when school was closed for the semester. They continued to meet and hang out each Wednesday on Zoom for their meetings.



This year's Eta Sigma Gamma National Health Education Induction ceremony was scheduled for April 22nd. The ceremony had been rescheduled to coincide with SCSU graduation. This year, we are going to induct 28 new Gammans, our biggest group in years. Of those, 10 are graduate students and 18 undergraduates who excel in their classes and health education service. The group elected to wait for an in-person ceremony over online, and we look forward to seeing and honoring them soon!

The Power of Social Media to Stay Connected

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Public Health has been using LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to stay connected to our community. Social media networking platforms have the ability to communicate "real-time" information and reach a large number of people across different demographics. Pew Research has been tracking social media adoption for fifteen years and states that 72% of all Americans use some social media platform (Pew Research Center, 2019). If you are not already doing so, please join our online community by clicking the links next to the social media icons below.



@SCSUPublicHealth



<https://www.linkedin.com/company/southern-connecticut-state-university-department-of-public-health/?viewAsMember=true>



<https://www.instagram.com/scsupublichealth/>



https://www.facebook.com/SCSUPublicHealth/?epa=SEARCH_BOX





HUNGER VIRUS RAVAGING AFRICA-CONSEQUENCES OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC by Freeman Oghaghare

At the time of this update on April 29, 2020, global confirmed cases of COVID-19 stand at 3,157,459, with an estimated mortality of 219,611 and 957,094 total recoveries. The Nigerian Center for Disease Control (NCDC) reports about 1,532 confirmed cases with 44 deaths in a nation of over 200 million people. These figures seem minor, but the fact is, we are not yet at the peak of COVID-19. Testing capacity has been minimal and only increased recently when more testing centers in other regions, predominantly the Muslim north of the country, opened.

In Nigeria, COVID-19 has been christened the disease of the rich for the sole reason that initial cases were observed in persons who had returned from overseas. Today, Nigeria seems to be at the stage of community spread. When the pandemic arrived in Nigeria, the National hospitals had less than ten working ventilators and respirators. Currently, there is a rush to acquire more using financial contributions from well-spirited wealthy Nigerians who have risen to the challenge. The United States has promised 200 ventilators to Nigeria, however, it remains to be seen if that will be enough to care for the sick. Nigeria and Africa at large lack the infrastructure to deal with this outbreak. Thankfully, the death rate has not shown the same disease infectious rate after a month with no scientific explanation other than an inherent form of resistance by Africans.

The government response to COVID-19 was the total lock-down of the country. The total lock-down has disproportionately affected the economic lives and activities of the people who work to survive on less than a dollar per day. The World bank poverty index reports that 93 million Nigerians live under the extreme poverty index so fear and anxiety of dying from hunger and starvation, is real. Nigerian-born economist, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala is advocating a "debt standstill" as a World response to dealing with this crisis as was done during the 2008 economic and financial recession. This will release about \$44 Billion/year, which can be utilized to strengthen safety-nets that will help mitigate a health/economic crisis. This action will be life changing for the millions of Nigerians who suffer economically, even in times without a global pandemic.



"We shall not defeat any of the infectious diseases that plague the developing world until we have also won the battle for safe drinking water, sanitation, and basic health care."

Kofi Annan

MPH Student Daisy Hernandez coordinates COVID-19 SCSU Mobile Field Hospital Staffing



MPH Student **Daisy Hernandez** serves as the Emergency Preparedness Coordinator/Health Educator for East Shore District Health Department (ESDHD). In addition, she is the Connecticut Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) Region 2 lead. Daisy is currently coordinating the medical and non-medical COVID-19 MCR workforce, which includes over 1000 volunteers in region 2. Her responsibilities include staffing the Moore Field House Hospital at SCSU and operating the Career High School Isolation Center.

MPH Student Nwanyieze Ngozi Jiakponnah is headed to study at Tulane



Nwanyieze Ngozi Jiakponnah has an MD degree from Nigeria. She is currently in the last semester of the MPH program and was recently accepted into the Interdisciplinary PhD program in Aging Studies at Tulane University for fall 2020. Her research interest is in exploring the influence of the social determinants of health, culture, and lifestyle on aging at the cellular and individual levels. She finds Tulane University to be a perfect fit because of the program's interdisciplinary approach to researching aging and the fantastic resources at the institution.

MPH Student Freeman Oghaghare is headed to study at SUNY Albany

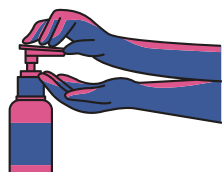


Freeman Oghaghare has an MPH degree in Environmental Health Sciences from the University of Ibadan in Nigeria. He has been offered and has been accepted to the PhD program in Environmental Health Sciences at University at Albany-SUNY. At UAlbany, he intends focus his research on food insecurity and environmental sustainability, an important area of research especially with the consequences and after effect of COVID-19 worldwide. His choice to attend UAlbany-SUNY stems from the synergy the institution enjoys with the New York Department of Public Health, there research focused and interdisciplinary approach, exposure and resources they offers as an institution.

MPH Student Brittany Bard receives the CT ACE Women's Network Award



In May, Public Health Graduate Assistant **Brittany Bard** received the Connecticut American Council on Education Women's Network 2020 Graduate Student Scholarship award. Brittany is being recognized for her work at SCSU and in the community related to food insecurity and food access. Brittany currently coordinates the SCSU Public Health food pantry housed on campus in the Orlando House.



SCSU Giving - Every dollar counts. No gift is too small!



Dear Students, Alumni, Faculty, and Friends:

I am writing to ask you to please consider supporting the **SCSU Public Health Student Development Fund**. This fund provides support to students seeking to further their professional development at conferences and study abroad experiences.

To access the site, please [click here](#) or visit www.southernct.edu/giving/give-online. At the site, select Give Online, choose the College of Health and Human Services under **designation** and then write in Public Health Fund in the **leave a comment box**.

Thank you for your continued support!

Jean M. Breny, PhD, MPH

Dates and Events

May 22, 2020 - Spring Final Grades Due

May 26, 2020 - Summer Session A Classes Begin

July 7, 2020 - Summer Session B Classes Begin

August 26, 2020 - Fall Classes Begin

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