

Institute for Society, Culture & Environment (ISCE)

**Conversations in Community Health at Virginia Tech
Thursday, January 29, 2009 – 11:30am-1:00pm
Graduate Life Center – Meeting Room C**

Meeting Summary

Welcome – Karen A. Roberto, PhD, Director of ISCE

Karen welcomed everyone and explained the role of ISCE and the history of the Institute for Community Health (ICH). The ICH is now under the auspice of ISCE while undergoing a process of review and decision-making about its future role.

Karen noted several compelling reasons for maintaining ICH:

- The Institute is well known in the state, particularly in the health department. Karen, Jim Bohland, Sharon Dwyer (ICH Research Associate) and others have a good network within the Commonwealth that can be leverage in the future.
- Community health is an area that has become important to NIH and large health foundations such as Robert Wood Johnson. The national funding profile is good and will continue to improve in the next five to ten years.
- The focus of the Institute resonates well with the Carillon medical school initiative.
- The new initiative for a Masters of Public Health will complement community health research interests nicely.

To begin assessing the interesting in and viability of ICH, ISCE is convening faculty across the campus to share research interests in community/public health and explore common areas for collaborative research endeavors.

Purpose of the Conversations Gathering – Susan West Marmagas, MPH, Research Fellow, Institute for Community Health

Susan explained that the purpose of the Conversation Gatherings is to facilitate dialogue between faculty across the Virginia Tech campus who share an interest in community/public health research and programs. The gatherings are meant to draw from multiple disciplines on campus and address all aspects of public health, not only community health. The intent is that these gatherings, and the formation of an ISCE Special Interest Group on Health, will lead to:

- Networking and sharing of public health research interests and expertise across the Virginia Tech faculty;
- More in-depth presentations of specific faculty projects at each Conversations Gathering;
- Identification of new collaborative research and funding opportunities;
- Identification of areas for multi-disciplinary conferences and workshops;
- Coordination with the emerging new Master of Public Health program at Virginia Tech;
- A portal for community organizations to find specific faculty interest at Virginia Tech.

Brief Introductions

Chris Kaestle – Assistant Professor, Department of Human Development. Epidemiologist with a focus on behavioral health; research focus is on risk behaviors during adolescence, using a life course perspective to examine the intersection of sexual behaviors, aggression and violence, and substance abuse.

Francois Elvinger – Professor, Large Animal Clinical Sciences, College of Vet Medicine. Epidemiologist in dairy science with an interest in surveillance of infectious diseases and addressing disease risk factors. Working with Kerry Redican to start a new MPH program at Virginia Tech.

Carol Papillion – Instructor, Human Nutrition with a focus on nutrition counseling and nutrition policy. Training dietician students, working with local community organizations, and on-campus nutrition counseling.

Brenda Davy – Associate Professor, Human Nutrition with a focus on obesity prevention and treatment especially the human clinical side; working with Marc Edwards on exploring the possibility of a center of excellence on water and health.

Kerry Redican – Professor, School of Education with a focus on health promotion, public health primary prevention and community-based interventions including in the area of youth risk behaviors. Working with Francois Elvinger on start-up of the new MPH program.

Lisa Poley – Visiting Assistant Professor, Institute for Policy and Governance with a focus on international development economics, developing countries, and a new global health initiative with the Virginia Bioinformatics Institute in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Max Stephenson – Director, Institute for Policy and Governance with a focus on governance, policy and processes related to institutions, international development, and social welfare policy both globally and domestically. IPG has a Global and Community Health Working Group.

Mary Beth Dunkenberger – Senior Program Director, Institute for Policy and Governance with a focus on domestic child and family welfare policy, programs and innovations, organizational assessments, and systems of care in local, regional and state efforts.

Kirby Deater-Deckard – Professor, Psychology, behavioral geneticist, developmental psychologist, with a focus on child and family behavior mental health, child/adolescent health, healthy parenting.

Sharon Dwyer – Research Associate/Health Educator, Institute for Community Health with a focus on community health, health literacy, health assessments, and community coalitions in the areas of teen pregnancy, chronic disease, cancer, arthritis, consumers and drinking water, and cancer in Appalachia.

Karen Roberto – Professor and Director, Center for Gerontology with a focus on a variety of aging issues related to family health including osteoporosis, chronic pain and elder abuse.

Susan West Marmagas – Research Fellow, Institute for Community Health with focus in environmental health, impact of environmental exposures on women and children, federal environmental health policy, and environmental determinants of cancer in Appalachia; interested in linkages between the built environment, healthy communities, and prevention of chronic diseases and conditions.

Brief Presentation on Development of MPH Program – Kerry Redican, PhD, MS, MPH, Professor, School of Education; Francois Elvinger, Dr.Med.Vet., PhD, Professor in Large Animal Clinical Sciences in Vet Med.

Kerry and Francois briefly reported on the development of the new MPH program at Virginia Tech. Efforts are underway between the College of Vet Medicine, Virginia Tech and the new VT Carilion Medical School to start the program in Fall 2010. The MPH will offer two concentrations in infectious disease and health promotion. The proposal and business plan are currently under review by the university administration; follow-up materials will be emailed to the group.

Possible Areas for Presentation/Discussion at Future Conversations Gathering

We discussed a number of specific areas for further discussion and possible collaborative work. It makes sense to highlight these possible areas for collaborations in future meetings:

1. Developmental Science Initiative (DSI) -- <http://www.psyc.vt.edu/dsi> Collaborative effort between psychology and human development. Includes faculty interested in developmental issues and behavioral health; there might be opportunities for collaboration with public health faculty;
2. VT-Carilion Research Areas -- <http://www.research.vt.edu/VTCRI/> – Several research areas have been defined for emphasis with the new medical school, including neuroscience; we may want to invite Dr. Seong Ki Mun, who is leading this effort, to present the agenda to the group and discuss possible collaborative efforts and linkages with public health;
3. Data Integration – There seem to be a number of participants interested in data related to public health and questions of data management and usage;
4. Earth Sustainability Core Curriculum – <http://www.uccs.ceut.vt.edu/about.html> -- There may be public health connections that could be made with this core curriculum being taught to undergraduates;
5. Global Health Efforts – We may want to have a panel of faculty talk about global health activities taking place with VBI, IPG, VCOM and other faculty on campus;
6. Obesity – There may be interesting conversations around the connections between obesity, nutrition, behavior, healthy communities, and the built environment. There is also a core on sustainable food and public policy;
7. Water and Public Health – Initial discussions are underway between Brenda Davy, Andrea Dietrich and Marc Edwards about this area of public health;
8. Broader conversations about putting together workshops and/or conferences on campus on a variety of public health issues.

Next Steps

- The spreadsheet of faculty, contact information and areas of interest/expertise will be updated and distributed to the group of interested faculty;
- ISCE will create a Special Interest Group on Health on its website and the spreadsheet will be posted and updated regularly;
- Relevant public health information will be periodically distributed; faculty are encouraged to email relevant announcements to the group;
- Next Conversations Gathering will be held on ***Tuesday, April 7th from 11:30am – 1:00pm.*** Further details about the meeting, and the featured presentation, will be sent in March.
- For questions, and follow-up discussion, please contact Susan West Marmagas, MPH at 951-0877.