Dear Alumni and Friends:

Imagine where we would be today had the world never known the likes of John Snow, Edward Jenner or Jonas Salk?

It was Snow who figured out in 1849 that contaminated water was spreading Britain’s deadly cholera epidemic, and contained it by convincing the city to stop using water from a pump downstream.

Jenner created the first smallpox vaccine in 1796 and Salk created a vaccine for polio in 1955.

The work of these and other public health professionals have enriched and saved the lives of countless people here and worldwide. The public health workforce of today likewise serves a critical role in protecting health and promoting the well-being of communities across the globe.

Our nation faces critical shortages in key public health areas. Without a shift in national focus and priorities, it is a shortage that will worsen.

There were 50,000 fewer workers in 2000 than in 1980, according to findings of an Association of Schools of Public Health taskforce. The taskforce also projects a need for 250,000 additional public health workers by the year 2020. To meet that need, schools of public health would have to triple the number of graduates over the next 12 years.

In this issue, we have devoted an entire section to the challenges we face in ensuring an adequate, well-prepared public health workforce. While there are no simple answers, it is vital that the discussion surrounding health care reform include provisions to strengthen the public health workforce.

At the OU College of Public Health, we are proud to participate in these discussions and equally proud of our graduates, who will carry forward the legacy of the public health heroes who have gone before them.

I hope you will enjoy reading this newest issue of OU Public Health.

Sincerely,

Gary E. Raskob, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Public Health, University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center

Provost’s Message

Workforce development is a critical mission of the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, and our College of Public Health continues to advance the education and training of the next generation of public health professionals. Yet, despite our best efforts, this nation is on the verge of a critical shortage in key areas of public health. That’s why it is so important that we remain vigilant in our commitment to advancing public health for this and future generations through education and awareness.

The OU College of Public Health has become an important voice in the current dialogue on health care reform on the national level, working to better inform government and community leaders of workforce, prevention and other issues related to public health.

OU College of Public Health leadership, faculty and students share a vision of improved public health for our state, our nation and the world. I applaud their efforts.

Sincerely,

Joseph J. Ferretti, Ph.D.
Senior Vice President and Provost
University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center

Promoting Healthier Tomorrows Through Education and Research Today
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Kenneth Warner, Ph.D., dean, University of Michigan School of Public Health

“Tobacco Control Policy: Results and Future Directions for Public Health”

“Since 1964 at least 5 million premature deaths have been averted in the United States as a consequence of campaign-induced decisions to quit smoking or not to start. I would argue that this is the greatest public health success story of the last half-century. But, here’s the other side of the story – smoking continues to be the greatest remaining burden of preventable death and disease in our society.”

C. Ross Anthony, Ph.D., co-director, RAND Center for Domestic and International Health Security

“Public Health: A Key Vehicle in U.S. Foreign Policy”

“The United States is still a world leader in health and in public health, and we ought to use that to engage with people in very constructive ways that are in our best interests. There’s an awful lot that can be done for very little money.”

R. Murali Krishna, M.D., chairman, Health Alliance for the Uninsured

“Health Alliance for the Uninsured”

“We have almost one-fifth of our population really not having any insurance. And it is a crisis. But it does not appear like a crisis as a community until we look at the numbers and look at the people and see what’s happening.”

Terri White, commissioner, Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

“Making Recovery a Reality for Oklahomans: Prevention, Early Intervention and Treatment of Mental Illness and Addiction”

“Access to care is vital. Ongoing mental health and substance abuse treatment, particularly prevention and early intervention efforts, are integral to our overall health. Oklahomans are suffering because of missed opportunities for prevention and early identification.”
Health Care Equity in Oklahoma

PIPED DREAM OR POSSIBILITY

Health care and how best to provide it has sprung heated debates, fear, myths and misinformation. But, former state Senator Cal Hobson said he is clear about one goal – the health care system in the United States is unsustainable and needs to change. Hobson, now executive director of University Outreach at OU in Norman, proposed solutions to the health care crisis during the 2009 Dr. Edward N. Brandt Jr. Memorial Lecture.

As his health mentor at the state Capitol, Hobson said Brandt was brilliant, accomplished, understated, modest, quiet, invariably correct, and most importantly courageous. He said it will take this same courage to fight special interests and fear of change to produce a health care system that is more efficient, delivers quality care and covers all Americans.

Hobson said the causes of the health crisis include sedentary lifestyles, poor diets, unequal access to care, spending more on health care on average than any other country, and our ability and willingness to spend large amounts of money to extend life.

While Hobson said there is not one answer or solution to the mess the country finds itself in, there are several options that can solve problems.

“We have to incentivize good behavior,” he said.

Hobson said solutions include:

- Supporting medical care that is backed by evidence of effectiveness;
- Putting doctors/nurses back in charge of determining care, not insurance companies;
- Transitioning to electronic records and information technology systems;
- Utilizing disease management with fewer specialists and more general practitioners;
- Lowering drug costs through shorter patent life for drugs, generic prescriptions and over the border choices;
- Making health insurance available for everyone;
- Changing government spending priorities;
- Prevention, including spending more on research, more taxes on items such as alcohol and cigarettes, and removing vending machines with junk food from schools.

“These are not easy or popular solutions to this crisis,” Hobson said. “Those all have been tried. But, we must do something. We cannot continue in the direction we are headed.”

Public Health Grand Rounds (continued)

Robert Mannel, M.D., director, OU Cancer Institute

“The Future of Cancer Care and Prevention in Oklahoma”

“With Oklahoma’s aging population, cancer incidence rates are expected to rise 20 percent over the next 15 years. What will change cancer morbidity and mortality is prevention and public health.”

Gerard Clancy, M.D., president, OU-Tulsa; Dean, OU School of Community Medicine, Tulsa

“The School of Community Medicine: Vision and Importance of a Public Health Partnership”

“It cannot be one discipline alone. All disciplines must work together. The alliance between traditional medicine and public health has to be very strong as we move forward.”
A young David Johnson seemed destined for a career in public health and a successful life in Oklahoma. He just didn’t know it yet.

The eager problem solver, who grew up in snowy Wisconsin, knew he was a fast learner and loved studying detail, so he enrolled in engineering at Oklahoma State University. After a year and a half of college, with mounting bills for tuition and housing, Johnson left for the oil fields. It was a steady paycheck, but the world of academic discovery called, so Johnson went back to school and enlisted in the U.S. Army to participate in the GI Bill program. That was 1971.

Twenty years and three degrees later, Johnson retired from the military with experience in environmental engineering and occupational safety. He’d served in Texas, Maryland, Georgia, Germany and several countries along the Persian Gulf. He was well-prepared and well-educated, but unemployed. That’s where a little good luck brought a new opportunity.

Johnson decided to attend the American Industrial Hygiene Conference and Exhibition, but he filed so late for the event that no hotel rooms remained. So, he found lodging with a fellow military veteran.

“He happened to know a guy from Colorado who had just gotten a job at the OU College of Public Health, but couldn’t go because his child was born with severe problems. So, he told me the job was open. I found out there were faculty members from the college at the conference, so I did a quick interview and they hired me. I’ve been here ever since.”

Johnson started at the OU College of Public Health in September 1991 as an associate professor in the Department of Occupational and Environmental Health. He earned tenure and became vice chairman of the department in 1997. In 2001, he became a full professor and department chairman a year later. Johnson also served as associate dean for academic affairs for five years until he stepped down earlier this year.

“Public health is problem-solving and that’s my main leaning in life.”

Even though his journey to public health education proved more winding than some, occupational and environmental health has been a perfect fit for Johnson, who used environmental engineering, biotechnology and sanitation engineering to improve public health in the United States and abroad while in the military.

“The interface between engineering and public health – I’m really interested in where those come together and how engineering can affect people’s health. Public health is problem-solving and that’s my main leaning in life. Anything I can find a solution for, I get a charge out of that.”

Outside of the office, Johnson has broadened his education further by becoming a scuba diver, a clock maker and an avid fan of history. Along with studying the genealogy of his family, which he admits can become quite addicting, he is researching Oklahoma history to satisfy a curiosity about American Indians and “why Oklahoma looks the way it does.”

Johnson’s wife Patsy works in the Department of Nutritional Sciences at the OU College of Allied Health. They have three grown sons and four grandchildren.

“It has been quite a series of coincidences that landed me here, but I have enjoyed every minute.”
The OU College of Public Health’s 2009 convocation ceremony was held May 16, honoring 92 graduates in seven areas of public health.

Drew Edmondson, attorney general for the state of Oklahoma, told graduates that community awareness of public health issues has never been more important.

“As attorney general I have been involved in many initiatives to improve public health in our state. I can tell you that now more than ever it is critical to get the community involved and to make everyone more aware of the public health situation,” he said.

Fifteen of the 92 students earning their advanced degrees achieved a 4.0 grade-point average. Ten students, along with faculty member Dr. Ann Chou and alumnus Dr. Mark Roberts, also were inducted into Delta Omega, the national public health honorary society.

“These hard-earned degrees that you receive today represent countless hours of dedicated classroom and field work. The reward is that you all are poised to make a real difference in the health of Oklahoma’s citizens as you embark upon your professional careers,” Edmondson said.

Special guests at the convocation ceremony included Rocky McElvany, interim commissioner for the state Health Department, as well as representatives of the College of Public Health Student Association, Crimson Club and the College of Public Health Alumni Association.
In addition to the presentation of master’s and doctoral degrees, special awards were made to the following students:

- College of Public Health Student Leadership Award  
  **Summer Frank**

- College of Public Health Outstanding Student Award  
  **Marek Greer**

- Oklahoma Hospital Association David Falcone Award  
  **Casey McMahan**

- General Public Health Outstanding Student Award  
  **Shelly Robichaux**

- Health Administration and Policy Outstanding Student Award  
  **Justin Baysinger**

- Health Promotion Sciences Outstanding Student Award  
  **Jyl Curry**

- Occupational and Environmental Health Outstanding Student Award  
  **Scott Anderson**

- Paul S. Anderson Award in Biostatistics  
  **Summer Frank**

- Paul S. Anderson Award in Epidemiology  
  **Noha Farag**

- Public Health Preparedness and Terrorism Response Outstanding Student Award  
  **Marek Greer**
Alissa Stinnett’s life changed on a whim one Tuesday morning when she walked into the academic office at Florida State University and changed her major. She gave up a full-ride music scholarship in 2004 to follow her dream of improving public health. While music was fulfilling and an area in which she excelled, it wasn’t feeding her soul. She had an innate need to help people; to teach them how to live better lives. It was the same need that drove her mother and grandmother into nursing.

So, Stinnett, a Kingfisher native, returned to Oklahoma to earn her bachelor’s degree in nursing.

“I came home to Oklahoma because I always wanted to go to OU,” said Stinnett, current president of the OU College of Public Health Student Association.

She took courses at the OU College of Nursing and the University of Central Oklahoma, graduating with a bachelor’s degree and becoming a registered nurse. While working with cardiac patients at an Oklahoma City hospital, she started to notice that many of the patients didn’t have the tools or education needed to deal with their conditions; and some patients – with both heart problems and diabetes – were frequent visitors. At the urging of one of her instructors, she looked into public health.

“I started to look at the big picture, and that’s what led me to public health,” Stinnett said. “Public health is like a puzzle. You have to bring together the right pieces. You have epidemiologists and administrators working with health promoters to be successful and make a difference in people’s lives.”

In the spring of 2008, Stinnett, 27, began her quest in earnest to seek solutions through public health. She enrolled at the OU College of Public Health and will graduate in May with a master’s degree in health promotion sciences.

Stinnett plans to continue working as a registered nurse, but with a greater focus on policy, education, the uninsured and the plight of working mothers who do great things for others, but often fail to take proper care of themselves.

“I really would like to work with heart-disease patients – modifying risks, talking about prevention and making people well. If I can get one patient to do it, it’s great. I want to help change the focus to one of activity and accessibility to resources and see those things turn around and extend our efforts into rural communities.”

When asked if she regrets changing her major and foregoing a college scholarship to be a health professional – a question she is asked often – she smiles.

“No, I love my career. I love my job.”
For the fifth straight year, the OU College of Public Health and Central Oklahoma Turning Point joined forces to promote wellness and prevention in Oklahoma City and statewide during Oklahoma Wellness and National Public Health Week.

Oklahoma Wellness Week, which received national recognition this year as one of the best new events in Oklahoma City, was held April 6-10 and included distinguished presenters during the college’s Public Health Grand Rounds.

“Oklahoma Wellness Week highlights the efforts going on across Oklahoma to build healthier communities and improve the lives of our citizens through education and wellness. The OU College of Public Health offers a unique educational component with their grand rounds series for the week. Their partnership is invaluable,” said Jackie Jones, executive director of Central Oklahoma Turning Point.

This year’s Wellness Week included the inaugural Zach D. Taylor Jr. Memorial Lecture in Ethics and Leadership in honor of the longtime community leader. Grand rounds presenters were:

“Moving to a State of Health Without Packing Your Bags: Oklahoma’s State Coverage Initiative – Private/Public Partnership,” Mike Fogarty, M.S.W., J.D., chief executive officer, Oklahoma Health Care Authority, and Kim Holland, commissioner, Oklahoma Insurance Department

“How Viruses Emerge: Prediction and Prevention of Infectious Disease Epidemics,” Donald S. Burke, M.D., dean, Graduate School of Public Health and associate vice chancellor of global health, University of Pittsburgh; the 2009 Delta Omega Society Lecture

“Health Care Equity in Oklahoma: Pipedream or Possibility?” Cal Hobson, executive director of operations, university outreach, University of Oklahoma, and former president pro-tempore of the Oklahoma State Senate; the 2009 Edward N. Brandt Jr. Memorial Lecture

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

IN ACTION

University of Oklahoma College of Public Health
A perfect storm is brewing in public health that could leave more Americans at risk and underserved.

Nearly one-quarter of public health workers in the United States are eligible to retire by 2012. Without new workers to fill the positions, the field will soon face a crisis that threatens to escalate just as the need for public health services expands.

By 2020, the Association of Schools of Public Health estimates that the shortage of public health workers will jump to 250,000.

“It’s an amazing number, an absolutely amazing number, and then you wonder what we’re going to do,” said Steve Ronck, deputy commissioner for community health services at the State Health Department. “I think public health is an absolutely phenomenal field to get into. But, public health positions are getting more and more difficult to fill.”

**Workforce Crisis Fast Facts**

- Public health agencies currently face vacancy rates of up to 25 percent.
- Epidemiology, laboratory science, environmental health and public health nursing are affected most by worker shortages.
- In some parts of the country, turnover rates reach 29 percent.
- The average age of public health nurses, the largest professional group of the public health workforce, is 49 years.
- Since 1988, the ratio of public health workers per 100,000 Americans has decreased by 39 percent while their responsibilities have increased.
- During the next 10 years, schools of public health will need to train three times the current number of graduates to meet projected needs.*

*Source: The Association of State and Territorial Health Officers
* Association of Schools of Public Health

**U.S. Public Health Workforce Shortage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Eligible to Retire by 2012</th>
<th>Percent of Public Health Workforce</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federal</td>
<td>37,620</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>43,065</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>29,070</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>109,755</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Association of Schools of Public Health*
To combat the shortage, public health leaders nationally are working on incentives, grants and an increase in federal funding. In Oklahoma, the OU College of Public Health is leading the way in bolstering the workforce by developing partnerships with state agencies and other colleges. These partnerships make the transition from the classroom to community more efficient and help ensure that public health professionals are well prepared.

Most notably, college leaders created the OU College of Public Health Advisory Board with representatives from state and local health departments along with business leaders, educators, community activists and members of American Indian tribes across the state. The board provides a mechanism for sharing information as well as an opportunity for collaboration. It is this interplay that provides critical insights into what is needed in the ever-changing world of public health preparedness and prevention and how to best prepare students of public health for their careers after graduation.

“The main benefit of partnership is the fact that the University of Oklahoma College of Public Health has a lot of emphasis on practice-based education where future leaders who come out of the program are prepared to step right into leadership positions and understand the real world,” said Gary Cox, J.D., director of the Oklahoma City-County Health Department and immediate past president of the National Association of County and City Health Officials.

Cox said the arrangement also benefits the general public since it produces a higher quality workforce with up-to-date practical skills and training.

Despite initial efforts, the workforce numbers are still staggering. The National Association of County and City Health Officials said local health departments alone could lose 7,000 workers nationwide in the next year. The economic situation makes continued layoffs and job position losses likely.

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

In an effort to reverse the public health workforce shortage, the Association of Schools of Public Health has proposed several solutions, many of which have been implemented or are being considered by policy makers and universities across the country.

The APHA policy and legislative solutions include:

- **Increase Federal Funding to Support Public Health Professional Education**
  Provide financial support to students pursuing public health graduate training through loan repayment and forgiveness programs, fellowships, strengthened practice experiences and promotion of diverse public health workforce with incentives.

- **Build Public Health Education Capacity**
  Enroll and train more graduate students, develop curriculum in emerging areas of public health, expand joint degrees, develop short courses, distance learning and certificate programs.

- **Provide Grants to State Health Departments to Promote Training**

- **Establish a U.S. Global Health Service**
  Coordinate U.S. efforts to build a workforce prepared to meet international needs.

- **Institutionalize a Process to Identify Needs**
  Create a process for periodic enumeration of the public health workforce to identify current and future needs.
“None of us has the single answer,” said Dan Boatright, Ph.D., senior associate dean at the OU College of Public Health. “We have to work in concert to do what we can to train and educate a public health workforce.”

A NACCHO survey showed that, in Oklahoma, 75 percent of local health departments had experienced layoffs or jobs lost through attrition in 2008.

The budgets for local health departments are declining at a time when need is increasing, contributing to the concern that services will not be available and severely delayed, especially for the growing number of older Americans. Fortunately, leaders and health agencies on the federal level now recognize the potential problem and are working to increase funding for prevention and research.

Cox said he and others are working to educate legislators and federal officials about the importance of public health in reducing overall costs for health care as an answer to current financial woes.

“What we do with public health has the most potential to save the health system the most money. There has to be a strong emphasis on community prevention because that saves the biggest dollars and has the greatest effect. Prevention has the potential to affect 60 percent of health care outcomes,” Cox said. “We are all for access to health care, but you have to include the public health aspect of that to be successful and cost effective.”

Linda Rosenstock, M.D., M.P.H., former director of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, said policymakers not only need to make changes in public health funding and education incentives, but need to make sure the current and future workforce is well-trained, adequate and in the “right places” to deliver the preventive health care needed. Rosenstock said more physicians also should play a role, getting trained at the master’s level in public health.

In addition to its efforts to recruit more undergraduate students to graduate studies in public health, the college is working to encourage professionals like registered nurses and physicians to enrich their professional credentials by adding a master’s degree in public health.

“We are concerned about the declining public health workforce,” Ronck said. “We need to adopt these policies that promote a strong workforce.”
Kendra Byrd  
**Edward N. Brandt Jr. Scholarship**

Byrd, of Alva, graduated from the University of Central Oklahoma Summa Cum Laude with a bachelor's degree in biology. She worked two years as a cancer research technician at the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation. She is in the final year of her work toward a master's degree in epidemiology with an interest in studying pandemic influenza. She works part-time at the Oklahoma Department of Health and assists Dr. Laura Beebe and Dr. Aaron Wendelboe at the College of Public Health.

Kimberly Hollabaugh  
**Dan J. Macer Scholarship and Rosetta Fisher Student Scholarship**

Hollabaugh, of Los Alamos, N.M., is working to earn her bachelor's degree in mathematics and her master's degree in biostatistics from OU. She has worked with Dr. Julie Stoner and with the Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust, the Southern Plains Inter-Tribal Epidemiology Center and the Susan G. Komen Foundation for the Cure.

Jennifer Elaine Huckabay  
**Edward N. Brandt Jr. Scholarship**

Huckabay, of Latrobe, Pa., is working to earn a master's in health administration. She has worked with OU Physicians and the OU Community Health Alliance’s Bridges to Access program on awareness of the uninsured. She is a member of the American College of Healthcare Executives and the Medical Group Management Association.

Ann Kruckeberg, M.P.H.  
**Robert W. Ketner Scholarship**

Kruckeberg, of Ponca City, earned her bachelor's degree in zoology and biomedical sciences from OU in May. She earned her master's of public health degree at OU and recently began work toward a doctorate degree in epidemiology. She has worked projects involving analyzing access barriers to health information exchange and is in the process of systematic literature reviews that have been the foundation for accepted publications.

Kathleen Popp, R.N.  
**Roy B. Deal Jr. Scholarship**

Popp, of Billings, Mont., earned a bachelor's degree in nursing at Oklahoma Baptist University and has worked in critical care. She earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics from the University of Central Oklahoma and is completing work on a master's degree in biostatistics at COPH. She is working with Dr. James George on several clinical trials with the National Institutes of Health and plans to combine these skills to improve the nation's health care system.

Candace Robledo, M.P.H.  
**Edmund H. Gleason Family Scholarship**

Robledo, of south Texas, earned her bachelor's degree in microbiology and a master's degree in epidemiology from Texas A&M University and completed a fellowship at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. She is working toward a doctorate in epidemiology at COPH, and plans to work in the area of reproductive and perinatal epidemiology.

Zachary Smith  
**Brent Hurd Scholarship**

Smith earned a bachelor's degree in biomedical engineering from the University of Central Oklahoma and worked for two and a half years at St. John Medical Center in Tulsa. He is working toward a master's degree in health administration and policy while serving as president of the American College of Healthcare Executives.

Joe Treanor  
**Ronald L. Coleman Scholarship and Rosetta Fisher Student Scholarship**

Treanor, of Lawrence, Kan., earned his bachelor's degree in human biology from the University of Kansas, then moved to Ardmore. He is working to earn a master's degree in environmental health science and industrial hygiene, and is actively researching alternative bio-fuel technologies. After graduation, he hopes to develop an environmental services company that specializes in increasing energy efficiency for residential, commercial and industrial clients.
Finding affordable health care coverage is a growing challenge for many in Oklahoma and across the nation. More than 600,000 Oklahomans lack insurance, and those who do have insurance pay more each year to cover the cost of health care for those who don’t — an estimated $3,000 a year more for the average family.

It’s a costly problem and finding solutions brought together government, community and business leaders at the OU Health Sciences Center earlier this year.

The chief executive of the Oklahoma Health Care Authority, the state insurance commissioner and the dean of the OU College of Public Health met with business owners in a half-day symposium to discuss ways to improve the overall health of Oklahomans as well as increase the number of Oklahomans with health insurance.

“Providing affordable health insurance and developing approaches to help people maintain health and wellness and to prevent disease and disability are critical goals if we are to lower health care costs and improve business competitiveness for the state,” said Gary Raskob, Ph.D., dean of the college.

Part of the discussion included the Insure Oklahoma Employer Sponsored Insurance program, which helps small businesses and employees afford health insurance. Since March 2008, enrollment in ESI has doubled to about 12,000 with more than 4,000 small businesses participating in the program. Unfortunately, an estimated 636,000 Oklahomans still lack health insurance coverage, and the number is growing.

“Insure Oklahoma allows small businesses to offer health insurance to their workers and makes the premiums affordable, thereby boosting prevention efforts, which leads to improved health for Oklahomans and removes some of the economic burden of the uninsured on our state and nation,” said Mike Fogarty, chief executive of the Oklahoma Health Care Authority.

Sherry Burt, owner of a furniture store that has been an Oklahoma establishment for 50 years, has seen the value of the Insure Oklahoma program. Like many other small businesses, Burt’s company shares health insurance costs with employees, and not all could afford it. The Insure Oklahoma program has changed that.

“Everybody knows that a well employee is a good employee. Absenteeism costs millions of dollars for businesses in Oklahoma. It affects everyone. So, this program has just been a wonderful opportunity to offer insurance to the people we care so much about,” Burt said.

“Our state has taken a valuable step in the right direction with this program that unites public and private entities in an effort designed to provide affordable insurance to more Oklahomans,” said Kim Holland, state insurance commissioner. “It’s a win for the employees and their families, but also a win for these small business owners as they invest in the health of their employees and ultimately the health of their companies.”

In addition to Holland and Fogarty, guest speakers and local business leaders discussed other innovative strategies and solutions for businesses to provide affordable health insurance and to help employees take personal responsibility for improving their own health and maintaining wellness.

By bringing government and business leaders together, the college and state leaders hope to build on successes like Insure Oklahoma and find even more ways to better ensure coverage for all Oklahomans.
It was fitting that the inaugural Zach D. Taylor Jr. Memorial Lecture in Ethics and Leadership featured Georgetown Professor Lawrence Gostin and his call to return to community, partnership and citizenship.

Gostin, J.D., director of the O’Neill Institute for National Global Health Law, recognized Taylor as an “example of leadership in public health and the health of communities.”

He encouraged more public health professionals to get involved with politics and policymaking as well as join the debate that has forever pitted the value of freedom against the value of public health. Central to this debate, Gostin added, are the ethics that guide all health professionals.

“Ethical values help us to understand and evaluate the really hard real-world problems that require choices in public health. One of those problems is the tension between public health and civil liberties. We need to get the balance right. We can’t have absolute freedom and absolute public safety, so sometimes we have to give up a little.”

Gostin cited as examples the ban of transfats, policies on tuberculosis and quarantine, and proposals to help reduce obesity by taxing soft drinks.

Gostin said more of these debates will arise with the renewed focus on community well-being and civil liberties, which he said has increased because of events such as the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks on the United States, the anthrax scare, SARS, obesity, pandemic flu and other health-related threats.

“We need to return to the tradition of partnership, citizenship and community,” Gostin said. “We have an obligation to protect the community as a whole.”

Zach D. Taylor Jr. was born in 1947. After graduating from Harding High School in 1965 and the OU in 1969, he went on to become involved with community improvement and leadership. He was involved in transportation planning, water quality management, air quality improvement and developing alternative fuels. Mr. Taylor was best known as the longtime executive director of the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments where he worked to enhance the 9-1-1 system in the Oklahoma region and upgrade the system to respond to cell phone calls. He passed away on Jan. 4, 2008.
Public Health Perspectives:

Workforce Issues Impact Nation and Globe

Call it the “bug” that caught the world’s eye – a pandemic triggered by a new strain of avian flu, H1N1. With 277,000 documented cases worldwide by September 2009, it pointed to a need to address critical workforce and other issues impacting global public health.

“We did very well with the first wave of H1N1, but we know the stress to the system could be very great as it comes back again,” said Linda Rosenstock, M.D., M.P.H., dean of the UCLA School of Public Health and former director of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

Rosenstock shared her views at a Public Health Grand Rounds presentation focused on the mounting challenges facing the nation and the world with regard to public health workforce development and health care reform. Without broad-based information systems in place and a well-trained, adequate public health workforce, she said the global response to an outbreak like H1N1 is slowed. In fact, in the case of H1N1, the disease spread so fast, the current infrastructure (laboratories, information systems, etc.) were not able to keep pace.

Rosenstock said the current public health workforce is doing an extraordinary job in an increasingly complex and demanding environment. However, the demands on this workforce continue to mount, while funding is lacking.

Rosenstock cited what she called the “97-3 problem,” a term that describes current funding. She pointed out only 3 percent of the $2.5 trillion annual U.S. investment in health care goes to public health, despite growing evidence that preventative efforts can save hundreds of billions of dollars in health care costs each year in this country alone.

“One of the most important areas of effort in the next decade is going to be actually quantifying the value of the investment in public health,” she added.

Obesity, a major health issue in Oklahoma and one that is growing globally, is such a quantifiable example. Rosenstock cited figures from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which show preventing obesity would save $147 billion dollars per year in the United States alone. She added that implementing changes to combat obesity, much like those used to combat smoking in recent years, requires a medical work force trained in public health, a major shortfall of the current system.

Rosenstock added that estimates from the ASPH show we will need 250,000 additional public health professionals by the year 2020 as well as an improved infrastructure for dealing with public health strategies.

Since health care reform and health insurance reform have become national political priorities, Rosenstock believes now is the time to educate the world, and Washington, on the importance of debunking the prevailing myths about our current health care system, a system rooted in treatment rather than prevention.

“We don’t have the best system in the world if you look at investments and outcomes,” Rosenstock said. “And, we can’t afford to reform? I think it’s obvious there is compelling evidence we can’t afford not to reform.”
Board Member Insights

Terry Cline, Ph.D.
Commissioner, Oklahoma State Department of Health

“Developing and maintaining a quality workforce is a priority for the Oklahoma State Department of Health. Quality health care and disease prevention delivered by top health professionals is integral to the quality of life for all Oklahomans. Our collaboration with the OU College of Public Health helps us achieve those goals.”

Terri White, M.S.W.
Oklahoma Secretary of Health and Commissioner, Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

“The unique collaboration between the OU College of Public Health, the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and other health entities in Oklahoma provides a much-needed opportunity for us to create an even stronger workforce and improve the health and wellness of our citizens.”

Barry L. Smith, J.D.
President, Oklahoma State Board of Health

“It is imperative for the well-being of all Oklahomans that health professionals and businesses work in concert with the OU College of Public Health, the state Board of Health and other health agencies to craft a plan for our future work force needs. A major component of this plan will be the education and retention of our public health graduates.”

Joe Hodges, M.P.H.
President, COPH Alumni Association

Kim Holland
Commissioner, Oklahoma Insurance Department

Leslie Hudson, Ph.D.
Community volunteer and COPH alumnus

Craig Jones
President, Oklahoma Hospital Association

Ken Lackey
Chairman, NORDAM Group

Mary Blankenship Pointer
Vice President, UMB Bank, and President, Western Heights School Board Foundation

Gregory Pyle
Chief of the Choctaw Nation

Ralph Richter, M.D.
Neurologist and President, Tulsa Clinical Research, LLC

Richard Rush
CCE, President and CEO, The State Chamber

Barry L. Smith, J.D.
President, Oklahoma State Board of Health

Robert Spinks, Ed.D.
President, United Way of Central Oklahoma

Tim Tippit
Managing partner, BMT Capital, LLC

Jerry Vannatta, M.D.
John F. Burton Professor of Medical Humanities, OU College of Medicine

Ronald White, M.D.
Oklahoma Regents for Higher Education, and president, Oklahoma Cardiovascular Associates, Oklahoma Heart Hospital

Terri White, M.S.W.
Oklahoma Secretary of Health and Commissioner, Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

Devery Youngblood
Senior Community Liaison, Chickasaw Nation
Alicia Plati's public health epiphany mirrors that of many students drawn to the OU College of Public Health - to improve lives and make a difference. But how?

The Boston native considered medicine and law, but neither proved the right fit. She wanted to teach people how to live longer and healthier.

“I was pre-med in my undergraduate degree, so I spent a lot of time on the clinical side of health care and I felt, at that point, I wasn’t going to be as effective at that part of being a clinician. I wanted to spend more time on why people were there,” Plati said.

But, on Sept. 11, 2001, while attending New York University, her undergraduate studies were interrupted by the terrorist attacks. The collapse of the Twin Towers damaged her neighborhood, leaving her without a home for weeks. She needed a change and a place to live, so Plati talked to relatives in Oklahoma, and moved here.

“After I got over the culture shock of Boston and New York to Stillwater, I liked it. The people in Oklahoma are nicer and it’s slower. It’s hard to go back to that go, go, go pace. I don’t regret any of it. I wouldn’t have had it any other way,” she added.

The die-hard Patriots fan finished her undergraduate degree and began her search for a satisfying career, working first with a community organization. She enrolled at the College of Public Health at the University of Oklahoma Schusterman Center in Tulsa to begin work on her master’s degree in public health.

Plati, 26, graduated with her master’s in public health in 2007 and became the program development coordinator for the Tulsa City-County Health Department. She is charged with analyzing the latest health data, developing new programs, writing grants, developing community projects and directing the department’s Pathways to Health program. The program involves chief executives from 45 companies, community leaders, state legislators and a representative from the governor’s office. Her most notable contribution to date was her leadership of the department’s push to become the first city-county health department in the country to earn regional accreditation, which it did in 2008.

“She’s been out of school for two years and she stepped right in and headed a complex accreditation process. So, graduates are coming out prepared for public health and the future of public health. It’s very valuable,” said Gary Cox, J.D., the former director of the Tulsa City-County Health Department and new director of the Oklahoma City-County Health Department.

Once at the health department, Alicia quickly learned her degree in public health was more versatile than she’d ever expected it would be, and a perfect training ground for what she found in the “real world.”

“Public health will be such a critical part of any health reform, and this degree gives you the capacity to move beyond treatment,” she said. “Without my master’s, I wouldn’t do what I do now, and what I do is pretty exciting. I just think it’s the coolest job.”
When the College of Public Health reorganized in 2002, they needed someone who could handle the college’s transition to online student applications, and had the skills to connect with students and colleagues. That job fell to Kathryn Adkins.

The Wayne, Okla., native joined the college in 1999 as an educational specialist. She quickly became the lightening rod for all things paperless. The college was among the first in the country to centralize online applications through a program from the Association of Schools of Public Health. This fall marks the first time all applications, reviews and support documents are filed online.

“When I first came here, students applied through the graduate college and they would send all of their paperwork here, so we were collecting stacks of paper from all over,” she said.

“The new system is more efficient, more environmentally friendly and offers invaluable visibility for the college with students from other states who might not know about the college otherwise.”

Adkins said she participates in frequent conference calls and a yearly meeting to keep up with advancements in the program, and to share experiences with others who took the leap to paperless records.

“Now, we can say it’s fun. We weren’t saying that at the beginning,” she joked.

Adkins promotes the college’s online capabilities when she travels to career fairs, high schools and other colleges to champion careers in public health and explain what’s possible at the University of Oklahoma.

After years of teaching English, it’s not difficult for Adkins to connect with students or help them understand the importance of education. It is the same ability she used to help daughters, Claire, 27, and Meg, 25, achieve success in accounting and academics.

“It’s nice when a student comes in a little overwhelmed and we can help them take the load off. It’s a nice feeling to see students bloom.”
In the summer of 2009, at the beginning of the national health care debate, Congressional committees summoned experts from across the country to Washington, D.C., to help them understand the looming health care crisis, and to offer recommendations on what changes needed to be made to reduce health care costs and improve overall wellness.

Dean Gary Raskob, Ph.D., from the OU College of Public Health was among the group of professionals asked to testify on behalf of the Association of Schools of Public Health.

Below are excerpts from Dean Raskob’s remarks to the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions:

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I want to begin by thanking you and your colleagues for the opportunity to comment on the health reform options being considered by the committee.

In the time available to me, I will focus my remarks on the importance of building health reform on a foundation of prevention and public health.

The culture of the health care system in the United States needs to be transformed from one that emphasizes treatment, often late in the natural history of disease, to a different paradigm – in short, a culture of wellness.

The public health sections of the current bill contain several provisions for improving the health of the American people. I will highlight four over-arching elements that will be key to creating a culture of wellness.

First, the bill underscores the importance of the full spectrum of prevention, from community-based primary prevention to clinical preventive services. Historically, less than 2 percent of each health care dollar has been spent on prevention while 75 percent to 95 percent has been spent to treat chronic diseases, many of which are preventable. Because the rising prevalence of treated diseases accounts for the majority of the growth of health care spending, efforts to prevent disease through primary prevention, what we do before an individual engages a health care provider, are critical to controlling costs.

Second, the bill recognizes the importance of the community, the school and the workplace as critical locations for implementing prevention and wellness efforts. We applaud the provisions to provide technical assistance to businesses to establish employer-based wellness programs. The Association of Schools of Public Health supports providing tax incentives to encourage employers to adopt workplace wellness and prevention programs that are evidence-based and yield a two to threefold return on investment.

Third, the bill recognizes the need for sustained and expanded public health research, especially in the areas of prevention and public health systems, including comparative effectiveness research. Particular attention should be given to developing and translating evidence to reduce childhood obesity, smoking and responding quickly and effectively to emerging health threats. Comparative effectiveness research should include research on a wide range of policies and interventions that affect health, including non-clinical programs and interventions, organizational and systems characteristics, and policies and regulations.

Fourth, the bill identifies the critical importance of a strong workforce. We emphasize that these efforts should address the broad public health workforce needs. The current public health workforce is significantly undersized given its responsibilities, which include ensuring safe food, clean water, an immunized population and protecting the public from emerging threats such as the H1N1 influenza virus. ASPH estimates that by 2020, the nation will need an additional 250,000 public health workers. ASPH believes that provision of scholarships, fellowships and loan repayment tied to a service obligation is an important strategy to achieve this goal.

Thank you again for this opportunity and I look forward to taking your questions.
Beebe Named Presidential Professor

Laura Beebe, Ph.D., M.S., director of the Oklahoma Tobacco Research Center and associate professor of epidemiology in the Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, has been named a President’s Associates Presidential Professor. The award is given to faculty members who excel in their professional activities, inspire their students and exemplify the ideals of a scholar.

Thompson Receives Regents’ Award for Superior Teaching

David Thompson, Ph.D., assistant professor of research in the Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, is the recipient of the Regents’ Award for Superior Teaching. The annual award is given to faculty members who demonstrate superior accomplishment in teaching, research and creative activity.

Tolma and Carabin Receive Stimulus Grants

Eleni Tolma, Ph.D., and Hélène Carabin, D.V.M., Ph.D., received part of the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act stimulus grants to expand their research. Dr. Tolma is looking at adolescent boys and girls in Oklahoma City to find which factors – from mentors to the condition of neighborhoods – has the most effect on their behavior. Dr. Carabin is working on a project to identify the processes that occur when people with HIV interact with parasites that both humans and animals can carry.

Oman Awarded Grant from Inasmuch Foundation

Roy F. Oman, Ph.D., received a grant from the Inasmuch Foundation to help fund the data analyses and planning for the next step of the Youth Asset Study. The study is increasing the understanding of how environmental factors and youth assets may influence a variety of youth risk behaviors.
**CLASS NOTES**

**2000**

**Bos, John** ('00 M.P.H. Epidemiology), senior epidemiology specialist, Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services; his wife, Christy and 3-year-old daughter, Morgan, welcomed their youngest daughter, Lauren, into their family July 23. John formerly served at the Oklahoma Health Department as an epidemiologist, Communicable Disease Division.

**Buriak, Susan, M.S.,** ('03 M.P.H. Epidemiology), and Anne Bliss, current doctoral student in occupational and environmental health, published “Descriptive Epidemiology of Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma in Oklahoma 1997-2003” in the Oklahoma State Medical Association Journal. Susan works at the Federal Aviation Administration’s Civil Aerospace Medical Institute as program manager for curriculum development and quality assurance, Aerospace Medical Education Division. Anne is the interim program manager/epidemiologist for the Oklahoma Central Cancer Registry, Oklahoma Health Department.

**Cowan, Sunshine, Ph.D.,** ('02 M.P.H. Health Education), CHES, assistant professor, community health program, Department of Kinesiology and Health Studies at the University of Central Oklahoma. Sunshine finished her doctoral degree in July 2009 and the next week gave birth to her son, Canyon Sage. Sunshine is married to Jerel Cowan.

**Findley, John R., J.D.,** ('02 M.P.H. Health Administration and Policy), is chief compliance officer and senior vice president, business ethics, AMERIGROUP Corporation. AMERIGROUP is a publicly traded company dedicated exclusively to caring for the financially vulnerable, seniors and people with disabilities through publicly-funded programs. John is responsible for the office of business ethics and all compliance-related functions within the organization, including oversight of health plan compliance officers company-wide. Prior to joining AMERIGROUP, he was the associate vice chancellor and chief compliance officer at the University of Kansas Medical Center, including serving as the co-chairman of the Association of Academic Health Centers Forum on Regulation. Before that, he worked in the office of the commissioner as special assistant to the deputy commissioner for policy, and as regulatory counsel at the Federal Drug Administration’s Center for Drug Evaluation, office of compliance. John also served in the executive office of the President of the United States, office of management and budget, as a Presidential Management Fellow.

**Schlorke, Patricia, Ph.D.,** ('03 M.P.H. Health Administration), will graduate from the University of North Texas Health Sciences Center next spring with her doctorate in public health biostatistics. Her dissertation research is on coronary heart disease and women.

**Thurman, Louise, M.D.,** ('08 M.P.H. Biostatistics), is a board certified psychiatrist who has been practicing in Oklahoma City for more than 13 years. She graduated summa cum laude at Cal State University, Sacramento, then received her M.D. from the University of California, Davis. In March 2009, the National Scholars Honor Society presented her with a Lifetime Membership in recognition of her academic and personal excellence. For three consecutive years, she was recognized by the Consumers’ Research Council of America as “One of America’s Top Psychiatrists.” In addition to her private practice, she is the chief executive and medical director of IPS Research Company, one of the largest psycho pharmaceutical clinical research companies in Oklahoma. Louise continues her education, beginning work this fall at the OU College of Public Health on a doctoral degree in biostatistics.

**Van Hoose, Holly** ('09 M.H.A. Health Administration), is serving as administrative resident, Washington Hospital Center, Washington, D.C., on a one-year fellowship. Holly was the first recipient of the Brent Hurd Scholarship in 2008 at the OU College of Public Health. The Hurd Scholarship is awarded to the top applicant in the M.H.A. program.

**1990**

**Cosby, Angela** ('93 M.P.H. Health Administration), recently accepted the position of chief executive with Surgical Specialists of Oklahoma. Angela formerly served as vice president at Baylor Health Care System, Dallas, and is happy to return to Oklahoma.

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Keep in touch! Just send an e-mail to Vivian-Glore@ouhsc.edu. We’d love to publish your news in our next issue of OU Public Health.
February
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Public Health Grand Rounds, “National Cancer Institute’s Tobacco Control Research Agenda: Where Science Meets Practice to Improve the Public’s Health,” featuring Bob Vollinger, M.S.P.H., program director and public health adviser, tobacco control research branch, National Cancer Institute. Special co-sponsor: Oklahoma Tobacco Research Center.

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March
4

April
5-9
Oklahoma Wellness/National Public Health Week

5

6

7

8

May
14
OU Commencement

15
OU College of Public Health Convocation, 2 p.m., Meacham Auditorium, Oklahoma Memorial Union, 900 Asp Ave., Norman. Reception immediately following in Beaird Lounge.