



Urban Transformations

Department of Health Policy & Management
School of Community Health & Policy

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HIGHLIGHTS: From the Department Chair • BRAC/MHEC Funding • Deamonte Driver Dental Project • Shelter Impact Assessed • Akers Leaves DHPM • Health Policy Careers • Publications and Presentations • Baltimore Partnership • Department “Briefs” • About the Department

From the Department Chair

Jonathan B. VanGeest, PhD

A new year brings excitement, but also the opportunity for reflection and introspection. What have we accomplished? Where are we going? Have we chosen a good path? I can't say that I have the answers to all of these questions, but I can report what we have accomplished since our last newsletter and comment on our overall progress. Faculty in the Department of Health Policy and Management (DHPM) have continued to make important strides in the priority areas identified in our 2008 Strategic Plan, particularly in the areas of scholarship (e.g., research, publications, and presentations) and service. Scholarship is an important factor in our re-accreditation as a public health program and helps position the School of Community Health and Policy (SCHP) for eventual accreditation as a school of public health. Efforts in this area also help Morgan State maintain its Carnegie classification as a research intensive university. Most important, as a practice-based program, our contributions to the scholarship of practice inform the development of community-based programs and initiatives in the city, state, and nationally. Service to students, the profession and the community is at the very core of the faculty role and at Morgan State University, we take these



commitments seriously.

Several of our recent accomplishments are highlighted in this issue of **Urban Transformations**. Many exciting things are happening in the DHPM and the SCHP. My challenge increasingly is to determine which of the many activities and accomplishments of our faculty and students to share with you. For instance, faculty in the DHPM recently secured our first funding under the state's Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) initiative (see story). We completed an impact assessment of the planned Housing Resource Center in downtown Baltimore, which is part of the city's 10-year plan to end homelessness (see story). We conducted an epidemiological study of African American women and their pregnancies for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In addition, all faculty members in the DHPM have actively supported the SCHP goals regarding service. The list is long, but as examples I cite Dr. Anne Marie O'Keefe's work with the *Deamonte Driver* Mobile Dental Van Project which provides dental services to children in Prince George's County and surrounding areas (see story), Dr. Anita Hawkins' service on the

Planning Committee for the *Why Women Cry* conference celebrating National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, and our participation in the *Baltimore Community Health Action Team (CHAT)*, sponsored by Sanofi-Avantis as part of their Community Health Partnership (CHP) program (see story).

Our interdisciplinary collaborations and initiatives are also growing in number and importance. The BRAC initiative involved faculty and administrators from Morgan's Schools of Architecture and Planning (SAP) and Computer, Mathematical, and Natural Sciences (SCMNS). Other internal partners include our own Nutrition and Nursing Programs and the Department of Social Work. External partners include, but are not limited to, the Morehouse School of Medicine (Atlanta, GA), Johns Hopkins University, the Maryland Judiciary, the American Dietetic Association, the University of Maryland, and our expanding network of community agencies.

Through our many community, academic, and professional partnerships we enhance the research and education opportunities we offer to our students, our faculty and our community partners. In doing so, we make real and lasting contributions to the health of the communities we serve.

BRAC/MHEC Funding

Jonathan B. VanGeest, PhD

On December 16, 2008, Lt. Governor Anthony Brown announced the 13 campuses that will split almost \$2 million in state funds this year to create programs to prepare Maryland's work force for BRAC-related jobs. BRAC, or the Base Realignment and Closure initiative, is the congressionally authorized process that the Department of Defense is using to reorganize its base structure to improve operational readiness and facilitate new ways of doing business.

Among the grants was \$107,059 awarded to Morgan State University to support development

of an applied interdisciplinary certificate program. This program will offer professional certifications in Health Records Management, Health Leadership and Management, Planning and Health, and Bioinformatics. Each of the certificates is anchored by courses in informatics, an emerging discipline at the intersection of the computational disciplines (i.e., computer science) with the humanities, arts, and the natural, biological, health, and social sciences. The push into informatics is being fueled by the rapid development of information technology and its associated infrastructure, the way we do science, and how we think about fields such as health services delivery and public health.

The certificates are being developed by faculty in each of the participating schools on campus. Faculty in the SCHP-DHPM were instrumental in developing the successful proposal submitted to the Maryland Higher Education Commission.



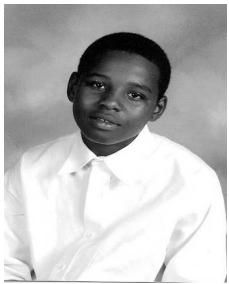
Lt. Governor Anthony Brown,
Chair of the Governor's
Subcabinet on Base Realignment
and Closure (BRAC)

BRAC represents the largest single employment growth activity in Maryland since World War II and will continue to underpin Maryland's movement toward a more stable and increasingly knowledge-based economy. The certificates, with their focus on applied interdisciplinary informatics, represent the SCHP's first BRAC-related funding and position the School and the University to respond to the state's priorities. According to Provost T. Joan Robinson, "The MHEC funding to support Morgan State's new informatics certificates will help breach the digital and informational divide that exists in this country, improve translational research and adoption of best-practices, and increase workforce capabilities in the city of Baltimore and the state."

Deamonte Driver Dental Project

Jasmine Sligh

How could a system and a society fail a child by allowing him to “fall through the cracks” and die? Who can we blame? Excessive bureaucratic red tape? Overworked social workers? Apathetic citizens? Too few dentists who accept Medicaid patients? In February 2007, these were the questions asked after the death of 12-year-old Deamonte Driver from a bacterial infection that spread from a rotted tooth to his brain. The procedure to remove the tooth would have cost about \$80; after two surgeries and weeks in the hospital, his cost of care and ultimate death totaled six figures.



Twelve-year-old Deamonte Driver. A routine \$80 tooth extraction might have saved him.

The outrage from this child’s unnecessary death has created a movement to ensure that no child goes without primary dental care. Launched by the Robert T. Freeman Dental Society Foundation in coordination with schools in the D.C. metropolitan area, their principals, PTA’s, and school nurses, the Deamonte Driver Dental Project emerged to provide dental screenings, triage, and permanent “dental homes” to school children. The screenings, provided in a mobile van that arrives at their schools, categorizes students’ needs for dental attention as: primary (cleaning, fluoride treatments and sealants that can be provided on site); intermediate (e.g., needing to have a cavity filled); and urgent (such as root canal to save a permanent tooth). The children are sent home with a dental “report card” for their parents to follow-up with members of *Dentists In Action*, providers who have agreed to accept uninsured and underinsured children who need care. The Maryland Legislature appropriated \$288,000 for the van that is fully equipped and customized to serve children,

community dentists volunteer their time, and local grocery stores are providing toothbrushes and fluoride toothpaste.

This project, the brain child of former President of the National Dental Association Hazel Harper, serves to promote awareness of oral health, increase the numbers of dentists who accept Medicaid patients, and increase the enrollment of eligible families in Maryland Medicaid. DHPM faculty Anne Marie O’Keefe, who has known Dr. Harper since they were in high school together, represents Morgan State University on the Project’s Advisory Committee. Morgan State’s role includes working with the media to increase community awareness of the service, social marketing efforts to improve oral health, and evaluating results of the project.

The tragedy of Deamonte’s death highlighted the importance of oral hygiene and dental care, and provided the opportunity to ensure that no child will ever die again from preventable and treatable dental problems. Thank you, Deamonte.

For more information go to:

www.deamontesdentalproject.org.

Shelter Impact Assessed

In the Summer 2008 edition of *Urban Transformations*, we reported on a new city contract to assess the potential impact of a housing resource center located in downtown Baltimore. The proposed center, part of the city’s 10-year plan to address homelessness, would be a year-round 24-7 emergency facility providing meals, showers, storage, and a wide range of services (physical and behavioral health, housing and employment support, etc.) to homeless adults in the area. It would occupy an existing building in the northeastern section of downtown Baltimore, directly underneath Interstate 83. The site is close to other service agencies including the new Our Daily Bread Employment Center.

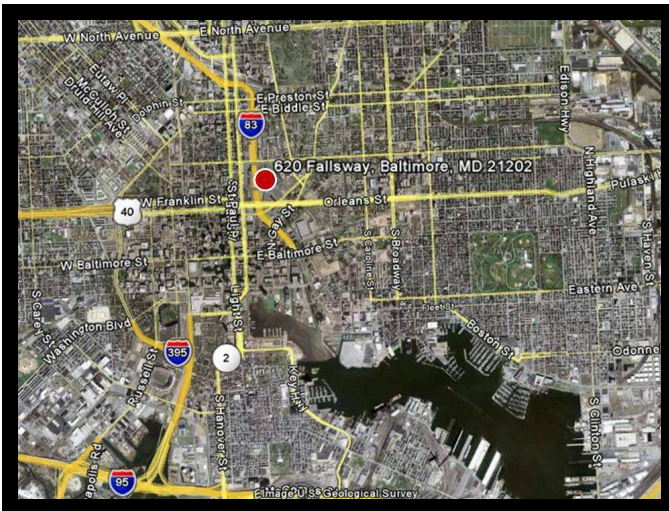
Akers Leaves DHPM to Take Position in the MSU School of Computer, Mathematical, and Natural Sciences

Dr. Timothy Akers is leaving the SCHP-DHPM to take a new position as the Interim Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies in the School of Computer, Mathematical, and Natural Sciences (SCMNS) at Morgan State University. We will continue to partner with Dr. Akers to develop research proposals and projects. We will also work collaboratively on creating a Center for Health Informatics Policy and Planning (CHIPP) and other projects in public health informatics and epidemiological criminology.



Dr. Timothy Akers is the new Interim Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies in MSU's School of Computer, Mathematical, and Natural Sciences

Dr. Akers will be truly missed in the DHPM. We all wish him well, knowing that he will continue to advance research opportunities and student success at Morgan State University.



Location of the Proposed Homeless Resource Center at 620 Fallsway in Baltimore, MD

The assessment, conducted by an interdisciplinary team at Morgan State University including city planners, public health professionals, architects and a political economist, employed an innovative multi-method design. The study used focus groups of key stakeholders (including community residents, local business owners and homeless individuals), behavior mapping (a systematic method of observing and tracking how people use a specific space), and secondary analysis of city data to create a complete picture of the impact of establishing the housing resource center.

The results yielded a number of important conclusions. Despite stakeholder disagreement on the causes and nature of homeless, there was consensus that community plays an important role in solving the problem of homelessness. Solutions should incorporate comprehensive wrap-around services, including public health services, to those afflicted or at risk. The study illuminated specific nodes in the community where homeless individuals congregate and included recommendations for more decentralized, smaller-scale supportive transitional housing in stable neighborhoods and increased support for affordable housing. Structural approaches to the problem should be coupled with efforts to address the multiple health, mental health and social service needs of homeless individuals.

Health Policy Careers

In a recent edition of *U.S. News & World Report*, **Health Policy Specialist** was identified as a “best career” for 2009. Careers were scored on five criteria:

1. job outlook;
2. job satisfaction;
3. difficulty of the required training;
4. prestige; and
5. pay.

The editors also considered the current long-term downturn in the economy and the focus on health care reform by the new administration.

Overall, the demand for health policy specialists is expected to be great, with good jobs available for people with primary expertise in, for example, medicine and management as well as individuals with interdisciplinary training. Salary data from PayScale.com indicates that median income (with eight years experience) is \$77,700. Government and nongovernment nonprofits hire many in the field, with the job title “affording a wide range of responsible work while often requiring only a bachelor’s or a master’s degree.” The full report is available online at:

<http://www.usnews.com/articles/business/best-careers/2008/12/11/best-careers-2009.html>



Publications and Presentations

PUBLICATIONS:

Akers T, Lanier M. Coming full circle: Epidemiological criminology. *American Journal of Public Health*. 2009;99(3):11-16.

Lanier MM, Lucken K, **Akers T**. *Correctional Opportunities: Epidemiological Criminology*. In Muraskin R. [ed.] Key Correctional Issues (2nd Edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall (In Press).

Akers TA, Whittaker JA. *Epidemiological Criminology: A Case for Socio-Biological Determinism*. In Lanier M, Henry S [eds.] Essential Criminology. Boulder, CO: Westview Press (In Press).

Fox MA, **Aoki Y**. *Environmental Contaminants and Exposure*. In Environmental Impacts on Reproductive Health and Fertility. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press (In Press).

VanGeest JB, Welch VL. Evaluating “Not in Mama’s Kitchen” second-hand smoke awareness campaign in Georgia. *Journal of Health Disparities Research and Practice*. 2008;2(3):73-87.

PRESENTATIONS:

Hawkins, A. (2009, March). Health status and health care utilization among a sample of recently released men in Baltimore City: Implications for re-entry services. American Correctional Health Services Association, Orlando, FL.

REPORTS:

Alabanza-Akers MA, **VanGeest JB**, Loubert L, Wong S, Kamal A, Perry M. (2008). *The Impact of the Baltimore Housing Resource Center*. Report submitted to the Baltimore Mayor’s Office.

Baltimore Partnership Links African Americans to Health Resources

Lorece Edwards, DrPH

Lack of access to health care is a key contributor to poor health outcomes in the African American community. Baltimore statistics indicate that African Americans are at significantly higher risk of mortality from a number of diseases, including hypertension, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and cerebrovascular disease. To address these disparities, the Community Health Partnership (CHP) "In Our Hands" initiative seeks to better link African American communities with local healthcare professionals, to inform and connect residents to available resources, and to empower them to improve their health.



(L-R) Dwyane Monroe (Sanofi-Aventis) and Minister Becky Leach (Transformation Church of Jesus Christ)

This new partnership involves local and state governments, patients, and patient advocates under the direction of Dwyane Monroe, community health liaison for the CHP. The CHP is an affiliate of Sanofi-Aventis pharmaceutical company. Its community agency component, the Community Health Action Team (CHAT), is comprised of representatives of local health care organizations, academic institutions, government agencies, and community groups. The goal is to make residents more aware of local health care services and programs. To help facilitate this, the Team is

developing a pocket-size Health Resources Guide that will be distributed in doctor's offices and community centers in the Baltimore area.

Through the leadership of Dr. Lorece Edwards, SCHP's Practice Director, Morgan State University was selected to host the February meeting of the CHAT. The DHPM also has faculty representation on the CHAT, working directly with Dr. Edwards to coordinate efforts to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in health and health care in the city.



February 2009 Baltimore CHAT Meeting, Morgan State University

Department "Briefs"

Drs. **Anita Hawkins** and **Jonathan VanGeest** attended the February 12, 2009 planning meeting of the Maryland Judiciary Research Consortium. This meeting was hosted by the SCHP.

Drs. Lorece Edwards (SCHP Practice Director) and **Jonathan VanGeest** hosted a recent meeting of the Baltimore CHAT (Community Health Action Team), sponsored by Sanofi-Aventis.

Dr. **Anne Marie O'Keefe** assisted with media relations for the launch of the Deamonte Driver Dental Project.

Faculty Search

The DHPM is excited about the possibility of adding a new assistant professor this academic year. We are interviewing for public health professionals with expertise in the areas of environmental health, epidemiology, and health policy for a joint position with the Department of Public Health Analysis. For more information regarding this opportunity, please contact Dr. Anne Marie O’Keefe, Chair of the SCHP Recruitment Committee, at annemarie.okeefe@verizon.net.

Health Policy and Management

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About the Department

The **Department of Health Policy and Management** at MSU-SCHP includes two content areas: 1) Health Policy and Management and 2) Environmental and Occupational Health. Graduates of the Department are prepared to assume leadership roles in designing and implementing effective policies and programs to eliminate health disparities, including initiatives addressing community and environmental factors impacting urban underserved populations and people of color.

For more information about the Department, please call the School of Community Health and Policy at 443-885-3238 or visit the School’s website at <http://schp.morgan.edu>.

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your professional accomplishments which we
would feature on our Department webpage.