



News & Views

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President's Pen

By Tamar Klaiman, Chair APHA-SA

Dear Students,

Many of you have begun the fall semester and, in the midst of homework, exams, and papers, are thinking about what you will do after you finish your degree program. Given the current economic climate and unclear future of the world economy, it is understandable that many of us are worried about what our next steps will be. This entry of the President's Pen is particularly for the Master's students who are considering staying in school to complete a doctoral program. Having been in your shoes, I thought some advice about doctoral programs might come in handy.

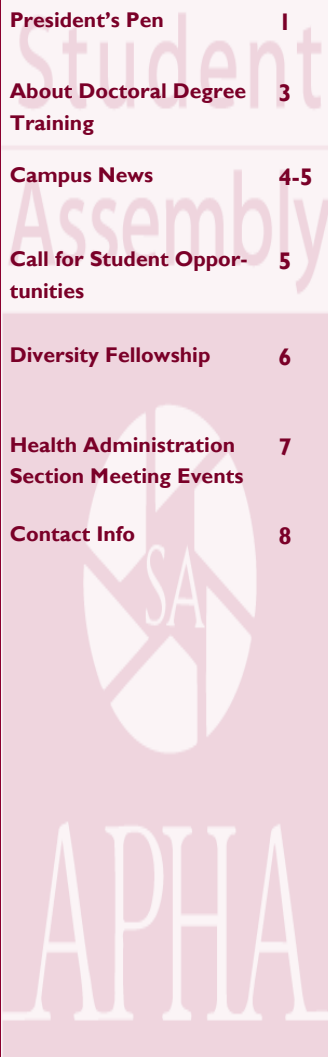
Before you decide that you won't find a job after you graduate, take a deep breath. Although it is not clear what will happen to the economy in the next few years, the increase in poor health status, reduced access to care, and quickly aging population gives those of us in the health field more job security than many other fields. Public health will continue to grow in importance, and we are facing a large workforce shortage that will need to be addressed sooner rather than later.

That being said, ultimately, the decision of whether or not to continue on in your studies should be based on what you are interested in doing. If your passion and skills are in program planning, Master's level training will serve you well; a PhD or DrPH will not be necessary in order to do the type of work you care most about. If you are interested in doing research, a doctoral degree will be necessary in order to gain an academic or upper level research position. This is not to say that having a Master's degree will not afford you the opportunity to conduct research, but the methods learned in doctoral training offers increased tools for more sophisticated analyses.

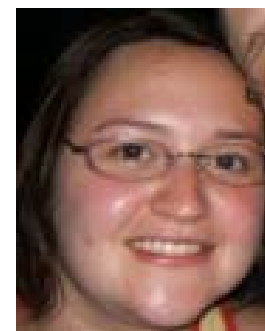
If you have decided that you want to go forward with a doctoral program, there are key things to keep in mind during the application process. The most important thing to do is find someone with whom you

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want to work. The most successful PhD candidates have mentors with whom they can work closely and from whom they can learn from on a one-on-one basis. Once you find someone you are interested in working with, contact him or her. Faculty love to talk to students about their work, and most are happy to talk to you about yours. It is best to find a few different individuals to get multiple perspectives and keep your options open.

Once you find the person you want to work with, enlist their help in the application process. Most programs will accept students if a faculty person advocates for their admittance. If you have grades, essays, and GRE scores comparable to other applicants, having the support of a faculty person can be what you need to tip the scales in your favor. Having a personal connection never hurts!

Also be sure to speak to other students in the program. Students will give you the “real deal” about the program including its strengths and weaknesses. Listen carefully to what current students have to say so you can decide if the program is right for your individual needs. If you want strong statistical skills, but the program you apply to has stronger behavioral and theoretical components, you might find that you made the wrong choice. Doctoral programs are very different, and it is important that you are honest with yourself about what is most important to you.

If you do not get in to your first choice, do not be discouraged. There are numerous students applying for only a few spots in most doctoral programs. Consider applying to more than one program, or if you are set on a particular school, think about your weaknesses, work on them, and try again. This may mean taking some additional courses, getting some work experience, or fine-tuning your goals in your essays.

Most of all, try not to stress too much. When we are in academia, we have a tendency to forget that most people do not have Master's degrees, let alone doctoral degrees. The skills you gather in your post-graduate training will benefit you enormously regardless of if you continue on to the doctoral level.

Best of luck to you all this academic year, and in your future endeavors!

Regards,
Tamar

Tamar Klaiman, MPH
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What to Expect from a Doctoral Degree Training

By Olivia Wackowski, MPH, APHA-SA Newsletter Co-Chair

This issue's President's Pen provides great advice for students considering moving on to a doctoral degree program. It's a big decision and for some not an easy one. So what does a doctoral degree program involve? What exactly is expected of students? In one of my first classes in my own doctoral degree program, I was assigned a journal article that nicely addressed these questions – *A Vision for Doctoral Research Training in Health Behavior: A Position from the American Academy of Health Behavior*. I remember thinking to myself that the article would have been helpful to me during the time I was contemplating applying to a doctoral program. Although the article relates to the field of health education and health behavior, its “vision” for doctoral training can be applied to all areas of public health. As such, I thought I would share some of its outlined recommendations and expectations.

In addition to discussing the purpose of the qualifying exam, the dissertation process, and the importance of engaging in research during one's degree program, the article describes seven outcomes of learning the process of health behavior research to be expected. I've briefly noted these as follows, though the original article provides several specific points for each of these outcomes:

1. Process substantive knowledge of the field: Doctoral students should have an understanding of the foundation of the field, as well as knowledge about the theoretical frameworks used in the discipline and the empirical research generated by it. Students should be intellectually curious.
2. Think theoretically and critically: Students should be able to explain problems in the field using theory, be able to compare research methods, and be able to synthesize the research literature.
3. Frame significant research questions: Students should be able to identify knowledge gaps, identify critical elements of a research problem, formulate research questions and hypotheses, and specify causal processes.
4. Establishing research partnerships with the community: Students should be able to engage communities as partners in the research process, as well as connect one's research to the work of practitioners and community members in the field.
5. Design research: Students should learn to align researchable problems with appropriate methods of inquiry.
6. Collect and analyze data: Doctoral students should understand methods of analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data.
7. Communicate with various audiences about research: Learning how to both write effectively and also present research in professional and public forums are skills doctoral students must develop.

If you are interested in pursuing a doctoral degree in public health, I urge you to read the full text of this article to get a better feel of the kind of skills that would be expected from you in a doctoral program. Good luck!

Baldwin J, Beck KH, Black Dr. et al. (2005). A Vision for Doctoral Research Training in Health Behavior: a Position from the American Academy of Health Behavior. *American Journal of Health Behavior*, 29(6):542-556.

Stress Reduction: Enforcing Lifestyle Changes vs. Effortless Self-Regulation

By Dr. Shveta Sanghani, Loma Linda University School of Public Health

In today's fast-paced society, the issue of stress and its management has undoubtedly become a foremost public health concern. Ironically, many of the methods used to manage and resolve stress (which enforce "lifestyle changes") seem to induce yet even more stress.

Keeping this in mind, Health promotion MPH students from the Loma Linda University School of Public Health in California designed a novel wellness program with the objective to effortlessly counteract stress and anxiety disorders. The program, which was based on the Health Belief Model, was comprised of simple techniques that encourage self-regulation of mind and body behaviors, promoting homeostasis (equilibrium) in lieu of enforcing lifestyle changes. Methods used included exercise physiology comprising of respiration control (6 different types of breathing rhythms), sun salutation postures (dynamic yoga postures that are known to regulate biologic drives such as hunger and thirst as well as increase energy levels and zest), endurance/resistance training, and nutrition therapy. Implementation and compliance to these techniques were made through cognitive restructuring methods. A new standard (consisting of a relaxed and still state of mind) was set for the mind and body, and participants were trained to become observant of this state of being. Any discrepancies from this new standard (stress/indulgence, turbulence, etc.) were observed. Self-regulation into the set standard was triggered through incompatible response. For example, if your biologic response to any stress (including over-eating food) is anxiety or restlessness, you apply a behavior that is "incompatible" to this undesired behavior, which is "stillness."

The stress reduction program is a two week program (six sessions, three times a week) or a one month program (eight sessions, two times a week). This program has been successfully implemented for students, faculty, staff, and their families and friends at Loma Linda University. It has also been implemented at Beaver Medical group in Redlands, California for their patients, doctors, and paramedical and non-medical staff.

Research was conducted on mental health parameters to validate the efficacy of the program. Overall, participants felt a significant reduction ($p < .001$) in anxiety, depression, and cognitive disorganization, while their performance and vigor increased considerably ($P < .001$). Indeed, preliminary data indicate promise for commencing this wellness program in schools and workplace as an efficient, easy, and adherence-friendly health promotion approach to reduce daily stress, anxiety disorders and increase work performance.

The program is an ongoing program and can be implemented through Loma Linda University School of Public Health in California. It offers stress reduction, weight loss, and preventive care strategies for any target population (all age groups, gender and professions) afflicted with stress, overweight and anxiety disorders. For more details, please check the website, www.wellnesshomeostasis.com.

Medical Student Projects: Preparation for Caribbean Disasters and Promoting Health Choices

By Helena Chapman, MPH, Iberoamerican University (UNIBE) School of Medicine

The 2007 hurricane season introduced Hispaniola to Tropical Storms Noel and Olga; these storms led to disastrous flooding, damaged houses, and lack of electricity and water throughout the island. To prepare the community for the current hurricane season, as well as the upcoming academic year, two health education projects were completed in the Dominican Republic by medical students in July 2008.

Beware of Infectious Disease! Santo Domingo

Students at the Autonomic University of Santo Domingo (UASD) and Iberoamerican University (UNIBE) organized this inaugural student-directed collaboration to increase awareness about dengue, leptospirosis, lymphatic filariasis, and malaria to both universities and the local community. Mural exhibitions described disease transmission, diagnostics, therapeutics, and prevention, while university libraries displayed book collections on infectious disease and parasitology.

Health Day for Veranitos!

UNIBE students presented themes on healthy decision making to adolescents enrolled in the summer youth program. Presenters focused on nutrition, physical activity, health consequences and peer pressure on smoking, alcohol, and body image, followed by interactive activities to increase self-esteem, build confidence, and promote healthy decision-making.

The impact of these collaborations resulted in students acquiring greater insight in the value of teamwork and health communication to reduce post-disaster disease transmission for communities in the Dominican Republic.

APHA-SA Opportunities Committee Seeks Opportunities for Students

By Yoonhee Ha, APHA Student Assembly Opportunities Committee Co-Chair

The APHA-SA Opportunities Committee is actively seeking opportunities for its members!

The purpose of the APHA-SA Opportunities Committee is to facilitate student access to opportunities in the field of public health. We provide students with information on job openings, internships, conferences, fellowships, and scholarships. Additionally, we facilitate opportunities for training, funding, research, leadership, volunteerism, and academic programs. E-mails with new opportunities are sent to all members of the APHA-Student Assembly each week.

We invite students, schools of public health, agencies, organizations, and others to share opportunities that will help our members to prepare for public health work or transition into careers. Opportunities may be school or region-specific or open to all students or recent graduates.

Please send all opportunities to opportunities@aphastudents.org.

2009 Ford Foundation Diversity Fellowships Program

Applications are now being accepted for the 2009 Ford Foundation Diversity Fellowships Program for Achieving Excellence in College and University Teaching. The Ford Foundation seeks to increase the diversity of the nation's college and university faculties by increasing their ethnic and racial diversity, to maximize the educational benefits of diversity and to increase the number of professors who can and will use diversity as a resource for enriching the education of all students.

Program Awards:

Predoctoral--\$20,000 to the fellow, institutional allowance of \$2,000 for three years

Dissertation--\$21,000 for one year

Postdoctoral--\$40,000 for one year, \$1,500 employing institution allowance, to be matched by employing institution

Awardees have expenses paid to attend one Conference of Ford Fellows

Approximately 60 predoctoral, 35 dissertation, and 20 postdoctoral fellowships sponsored by the Ford Foundation are to be awarded.

Eligibility Requirements:

All U.S. citizens or nationals, regardless of race or ethnicity

Individual with evidence of superior academic achievement

Individuals committed to a career in teaching and research at the college or university level in a research-based field of science, social sciences, or humanities

Application Deadline Dates:

Predoctoral: November 14, 2008

Dissertation: November 28, 2008

Postdoctoral: November 28, 2008

For additional information about the awards, their respective eligibility and selection criteria, and for award applications, please visit the National Academies Web site at:

<http://nationalacademies.org/fellowships>



Exercise your civic duty!

**Don't forget to vote on
November 4!**



By Julie Nguyen, Student Assembly Diversity Committee Co-Chair

Not only is the Health Administration (HA) Section of APHA celebrating its 100th anniversary with its own members—the Student Assembly is also included in the festivities! We are fortunate enough to have a fantastic chair that supports our involvement in all things HA related. She has even decided to match the first \$500 contribution that members have donated for students' registration fees for the San Diego APHA Annual Meeting for this year's 100 year anniversary! This year, the section provided several student scholarships for interviews conducted with the past leaders of health administration and even added awards for student leadership in the section.

Here is a list of upcoming events advertised by the HA Section for the upcoming Annual Meeting:

- Register for the 100 year anniversary celebration at Croce's Jazz Bar and Grill October 28, 2008, 6:00PM <http://www.apha.org/membersgroups/sections/aphasections/healthadmin/HASAnniversary.htm>
- Strategies for Building Careers in Public Health
Tuesday, October 28, 2008, 2:30PM
San Diego Convention Center, Meeting Room 16A
Using the perspective of academia in local, state, and national levels of public health, the objectives of the discussion include mentoring, professional organization involvement, and education opportunities.
- Before the Annual Meeting: Tour Tijuana with local activists defending public health, the environment and labor rights. The tours are being coordinated and handled by completely non-APHA organizations, so no work is involved by APHA HQ staff or any other APHA staff. For more information, contact gdbrown@igc.org



American Public Health Association

Student Assembly

About Our Organization

The American Public Health Association's Student Assembly is the nation's largest student-led organization dedicated to furthering the development of students, the next generation of professionals in public health and health-related disciplines. APHA-SA represents and serves students of public health and other health-related disciplines by connecting individuals who are interested in working together on public health and student-related issues.

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**Check us out on the web!/
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