

April 7, 2015

Hello Team,

I am excited to be back at our College of Public Health after my travels to Sierra Leone! As you know, UNMC was accepted as a member of the World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN) and I was invited to assist the WHO in responding to the Ebola Outbreak. While it was exciting to be in the field and showcasing UNMC's global leadership, there is much work to do in the region. As I mentioned in this month's "All Hands" gathering, others will be called on to assist with this epidemic, or another, in the future and I have no doubt we'll be ready to serve.

Upon my return, I discovered our Strategic Planning Design Team, led by co-chairs Jane Meza and Nizar Wehbi, hard at work ensuring the process moves forward and is being communicated to everyone. The Design Team was instrumental in securing two excellent speakers. We just held our first of many strategic retreats, town hall meetings, and consultations. The group answered the questions, "what will be the critical public health needs and what will we be known for in 10 years," and thanks to our student representatives, we will be increasingly student centric.

We continue the search process for the Department of Health Promotion, Social & Behavioral Health Chair position. The search committee is currently working on scheduling 3 candidates to visit the college later this month.

This month I had the honor of testifying before the Nebraska Legislature on LB 573, the Health Enterprise Zone Act, which is of great importance. Health Enterprise Zones are critical to reducing health disparities among racial and ethnic minority populations and among geographic areas; improving health care access and health outcomes in underserved communities; and reducing health care costs and hospital admissions and re-admissions. To receive designation as a HEZ, community coalitions identify contiguous geographic areas with measurable and documented economic disadvantage and poor health outcomes and propose a creative plan for targeted investments in community health. While this is unlikely to advance in the legislature, I am enjoying meeting many of our legislators and learning about the processes to effect policy changes for health.

South Omaha community leaders were generous enough to join me, Athena Ramos, and Natalie Trinidad for lunch this month as we discussed how we can foster community health in South Omaha. It was a productive dialogue and many great ideas surfaced. Leaders shared some of the high points of working with UNMC and it was great to hear others appreciating our good work.



ASPPH was held the week of March 22. A few “takeaways” from the annual conference were that changes are on the way in the areas of accreditation, competencies, and programs to ensure that our, and other colleges of public health are preparing students to make an impact in our communities locally, nationally, and globally.

Looking forward to Public Health Week – I will spend some of this week in DC at some public White House events on climate change. And the Dean’s Office team (the Dynamos!) is ready to challenge other teams within the College and across campus in the Fitness That Works Challenge. The challenge will get us all incorporating cardio exercises into our daily routine, which we know everyone can use.

Always listening,
Ask

Ali S. Khan, MD, MPH

Retired Assistant Surgeon General, USPHS

Dean and Professor

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