

December 23, 2015

Dear Team,

As the year comes to a close, it's a great time for all of us to reflect on our accomplishments and give thanks for the remarkable year at the College.

Our incredible students excelled again. Some highlights include Niodita Gupta having an abstract on prostate cancer selected for the "best student paper presentation award" from the APHA medical care section, continuing a three year winning streak by our students. We had several APHA awardees; congratulations to Yang Wang, Fang Qui, Jocelyn Herstein and Katelyn Jelden on their excellent work! David Taylor was the recipient of the US Public Health Service 2015 Excellence in Public Health Award. Wrapping up the year, was the Bridge to Care event. The health fair took place in November with nearly 130 students serving over 300 refugees, coordinated by our own Katelyn Jelden.

Our goal to become the healthiest state in the union has been embraced by the Chancellor and UNMC/Nebraska Medicine as well as many of our partners. We have taken the lead on two important collective impact projects and have engaged over a dozen public health entities to decrease binge drinking and increase colorectal cancer screening rates. We continue to build our visibility and trust in the community as a public health partner. We are active in the North Omaha Change Initiative that is focused on violence prevention. We are providing evidence in favor of Comprehensive Sex Education and the positive impact it can have. We remained number 10 in the 2015 America's Health rankings and have much work to do.

As you know, I visited all of Nebraska's health departments and tribal health centers. I've started my return visits and will continue those in 2016 with the purpose of continuing to learn what our practitioners are doing in the field, identify their needs, and understand ways we can be purposeful collaborators.

Our science and programs continue to evolve. The New Year will bring a new Chair in the Department of Health Promotion, Social and Behavioral Health, Dr. Paul Estabrooks. Ruth and Bill Scott very generously endowed the Harold Maurer, MD, Distinguished Chair of Public Health. This summer, UNMC/Nebraska Medicine, in collaboration with Emory University in Atlanta and Bellevue Hospital Center in New York City, were awarded a \$12 million grant by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to establish and co-lead the nation's National Ebola Training and Education Center (NETEC). Congratulations to Dr. Phil Smith and Dr. John Lowe on the award and designation as a national leader in training and preventing emerging infectious diseases. Dr. Mo Siahpush is also taking the lead on a \$10 million CMS telehealth grant.

Our very generous community has taken note of our accomplishments and are committed to our success. Your passion for public health is spreading! A thank you to everyone, including those in the College as well as our other generous donors. Fred and Eve Simon's generous donations to the College will support scholarships, enhance the student experience and program development, and to provide seed grants for research and faculty support. This support will ensure we continue to have the best and brightest students and faculty to lead the innovation of the public health field. Our deepest sympathy to the Simon family on Fred's passing – his passion to move the public health field forward was contagious and he will be deeply missed. Thank you to the Weitz Family Foundation that donated generously over the next three years for student scholarships to support local and state health non-governmental organization professionals to get a certificate or MPH degree. This will dramatically improve public health practice in our state. And, a thank you to an anonymous donor who over the next three years is supporting new models of health care preparedness with Dr. Sharon Medcalf.

I am deeply grateful to Dr. Mo Siahpush for fulfilling the Interim Chair position for the Department of Health Promotion, Social and Behavioral Health and Dr. Elli Rogan for fulfilling the Interim Associate Dean for Research position. Another big thank you to Dr. Jane Meza whose leadership is second to none. And to all of our faculty, staff, students, alumni and community partners who have been involved in our Strategic Planning process. You are vital champions to help the College achieve our vision of helping Nebraska become the healthiest state in the nation by 2020.

I have no doubt that 2016 will be an even better year establishing the next generation of public health leaders and world-renowned public health models to improve the health of communities across the globe. Our passion for social justice, the work of our Diversity Council and our continued development of national and global programs are sure to make a local and global impact on the public health field.

Wishing you and yours a happy, safe, relaxing holiday season.

Always listening,
Ask

Ali S. Khan, MD, MPH

Retired Assistant Surgeon General, USPHS

Dean and Professor

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