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UNH Center On Adolescence Focuses On The Healthy Development Of Youth

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Nov. 9, 2004

DURHAM, N.H. – The University of New Hampshire Center on Adolescence, formerly known as the Adolescence Resource Center, has named internationally renowned scholar Nancy Guerra as co-director.

Guerra, who is also associate dean for research in UNH's School of Health and Human Services and College of Liberal Arts, will share directing responsibilities for the Center on Adolescence with Kristine Baber, UNH associate professor of family studies.

“This name change reflects our intensified focus on research and our plan to become more regionally and nationally involved,” says Baber, who has directed the center since it opened in 2002. “We are very excited about Dr. Guerra’s association with the center. She is an exceptionally accomplished researcher and scholar who has been involved in national and international projects focused on adolescents.”

Prior to joining UNH, Guerra was professor of psychology at the University of California at Riverside. She has published extensively on adolescent development and prevention of problem behaviors among at-risk youth, and her work has been funded by an array of federal agencies including the National Institute for Mental Health, the National Institute for Child Development, and the Centers for Disease Control.

Guerra will continue as principal investigator and director of the Academic Center of Excellence on Youth Violence Prevention at UC-Riverside, one of 10 centers of excellence across the United States funded by the Centers for Disease Control. This center emphasizes prevention of violence and youth problems among immigrant youth, links between alcohol/substance use and youth violence, and the development of community capacity and social capital as cornerstones of effective communities that support healthy youth development. It also engages physicians and health care practitioners in youth violence prevention at the primary care level.

In addition to these grant-funded research projects, Guerra has worked with the John S. & James L. Knight Foundation, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation to develop prevention planning and youth service programs in communities across the United States. Internationally, she has worked with World Bank and the Interamerican Development Bank to facilitate program development and prevention of youth risk behaviors in Jamaica, Chile, and Colombia, and is currently working with the government of Trinidad and Tobago to develop a nationwide strategy for promoting healthy youth development and violence prevention.

The UNH Center on Adolescence aims to promote the healthy development of young people and prevent the emergence of risky behaviors such as violence and substance use. Its work is guided by the strategic plan for adolescent health and well being developed last year in collaboration with the New Hampshire Bureau of Maternal and Child Health.

The center's research activities focus on how to increase youth engagement in productive activities, build competence and character, and strengthen schools, families, and communities in order to support healthy youth development. Emphasis is placed on working collaboratively with these partners to evaluate and disseminate information on best practices and to design innovative strategies to address the needs of all youth, especially those most at-risk. Research and service is focused on designing and implementing programs for typically underserved populations, such as rural and immigrant youth and their families.

The center also provides an opportunity for scholars from different disciplines at UNH to interact in a synergistic manner to address critical problems and solutions for youth.

In addition to co-directors Baber and Guerra, the center has a program coordinator, Gretchen Bean, and 30 center associates—faculty and staff from diverse disciplines in both the School of Health and Human Services and the College of Liberal Arts who are involved in research, teaching, or programming related to adolescence.

According to Guerra, “such collaboration is essential for addressing the complex needs of today's youth.”

In her role as associate dean for research, Guerra will help advance and coordinate faculty scholarship in the area of adolescence, as well as help extend research findings to those working with youth through the Center on Adolescence.

The UNH Center on Adolescence is located in Pettee Hall on the UNH campus. You can learn more about the center at its Website at www.adolescence.unh.edu.