

# Population Health *Matters*

## Reflections from the Harvard Second Century Symposium of Transforming Public Health, and Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health (ASPPH) Annual Conference

The beginning of the year 2015 will mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the infamous Welsh-Rose Report that created academic professional training in public health, originally funded by the Rockefeller Foundation.<sup>1</sup> For nearly fifty (50) years, academic public health training programs existed solely in independent *Schools of Public Health*. National academic accreditation of graduate programs in public health began in 1945 through the American Public Health Association. With the growth of academic public health education, an independent body, the Council of Education for Public Health (CEPH), was founded in 1974 to organize and manage national accreditation of university public health training programs.<sup>2</sup>

An Association for Schools of Public Health (ASPH) was formed in 1953 to represent academic public health training institutions. Over the past sixty years, in addition to the growth of schools of public health, programs of public health within other Colleges, Schools and Departments in universities have proliferated and have become accredited by CEPH that now outnumber schools of public health by approximately 2:1 in the US. The ASPH recently expanded its organization to include accredited programs of public health like Thomas Jefferson University's, MPH Program within its School of Population Health. Thomas Jefferson University's MPH Program joined the new organization, now called the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health (ASPPH) this past August as a Founding Member of ASPPH.<sup>3</sup>

As the Director for our MPH program, I represented Jefferson at the first annual conference of the new ASPPH in Boston this past November prior to the American Public Health Association annual meeting. The three-day meeting was preceded by a special symposium held by the Harvard School of Public Health which celebrated its 100 year anniversary of its collaboration with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) for the formation of its school of public health. At Harvard, its President, Drew Gilpin Faust and School of Public Health Dean, Julio Frank, presented its three year initiative that transformed its masters and doctoral level public health education and research programs and facilitated four national panels from the public health, science, and business education around the digital revolution and science of education, re-inventing the classroom, campus, and community, learning assessment for action and impact, and transforming the public health field.<sup>4</sup> It was an incredible learning experience that will be shared with our university and school leadership, our advisory board, our faculty, and of course, our public health students.

The ASPPH annual meeting was a robust meeting of public health Deans, Associate Deans, Program Directors and faculty representing over 70 universities.<sup>5</sup> I participated in several council and section meetings in Health Policy and Management, Behavioral and Social Sciences, and Public Health Practice. The plenary sessions addressed topics such as financing a public health degree, public

health leadership, embracing diversity in one's institution, academic public health practice, the ACA and Public Health: Massachusetts Example, and Big Data in Public Health. The concluding session was the ASPPH first-ever Board of Directors meeting where the By-laws were finalized and the expanded organization representing nationally accredited schools and programs of public health formally was constituted. Joining the ASPPH is a major commitment for Jefferson's School of Population Health and its MPH program. There are many potential advantages including joining the national public health application system, SOPHAS, expanding our influence and opportunity for input into the changing field of academic public health education, increased grant and cooperative agreement funding opportunities, and increasing marketing of our program at a national level. This new organizational membership for Jefferson does come with a heavy financial and managerial time cost to be part of an expanded national organization for public health. We are now at the table with the large, nationally recognized, public health institutions such as Johns Hopkins, Columbia, Harvard, North Carolina, UCLA, and Michigan to name a few. Time will tell on its impact for our relatively new public health program. ■

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