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A Fulbright to India

**Charles V. Shorten, Ph.D., P.E., Professor of Environmental Health
Department of Health, West Chester University**

During the spring 2006 semester I had the experience of a lifetime: a Fulbright Scholarship to live and work on the campus of Delhi College of Engineering in Delhi, India. One of the most frequently asked questions before I left was, "India? Why India?" Through my teaching of the interdisciplinary course *Humans and the Environment*, where over the years I've encouraged students to think about global environmental issues, I wanted to see firsthand how this heavily populated nation deals with its water, waste and public health problems. What I found was a society of individuals struggling with modernization and technological advancement in the midst of deeply rooted cultural customs and family expectations.

The question I was most often asked once I arrived was, "How do you like India?" In a farewell letter which I read to my Indian colleagues and students just before leaving, I wrote that "I like it very much, but more than India what I like most is her people." I taught two courses while there, one at the graduate and one at the undergraduate level. My students and colleagues were very respectful and at times deferential, but they didn't hesitate to challenge me technically or culturally. They helped me to fine-tune my perceptions of Indian environmental concerns during classes and in office conversations, but they also invited me to ceremonies, parties and dinners as well. They welcomed me to all aspects of life at the Delhi College of Engineering. My Fulbright provided opportunity for travel within India, and I took full advantage of it. I traveled to the deserts of Rajasthan where I toured ancient forts and observed a lifestyle fully adapted to the dry conditions there. I attended a patriotic border-crossing ceremony at the gate between Amritsar, India, and Lahore, Pakistan. I watched fisherman hauling in their catch along the Bay of Bengal and observed wildlife in the Corbett and Keoladeo National Parks. In Delhi I toured numerous monuments, and during an especially memorable visit I took my wife and daughter to the Taj Mahal. I ended my visit to India with a two-week trek to the Himalayan source of the most sacred of Indian rivers, the Ganges, where I washed my feet and my soul.

I'm thankful to the Fulbright Scholar Program for awarding the grant to study and work in India, but I also appreciate West Chester University's additional support and funding, without which I would not have been able to go. I'm hoping to continue my conversations and collaboration with my new Indian colleagues and will work to build bridges between our two institutions. Now, in the classroom, I find myself constantly saying, "when I was in India..." and my students just want to hear more. I couldn't have asked for a better outcome.

Right: Dr. Charles Shorten prepares for a camel safari in the Saam Desert, Rajasthan, India.



Summer Workshop in Mexico: HEA 435/581

Students interested in traveling to Guanajuato, Mexico, with Dr. Debra E. Bill, from May 16th-May 21, 2007 (tentative dates), to participate in a workshop travel course entitled, "Mexican Culture and Health," should send an e-mail to Dr. Bill at dbill@wcupa.edu. The course offers students a unique opportunity to better understand the traditional and non-traditional health system of Mexico, by visiting health facilities and traditional healers. We also visit historical, artistic and cultural sites located in the beautiful state of Guanajuato (the mid-region of Mexico). Lodging is provided at a lovely bed and breakfast. You do not have to speak Spanish to be enrolled. The class meets twice before the trip. The estimated cost of the trip for airfare, meals, lodging, and transportation is around \$1200. Upon returning from Mexico, participants develop a health project to improve the welfare of Mexicans/Mexican-Americans in the Delaware Valley Region. The majority of Mexicans who migrate to Chester County come from Guanajuato. M.P.H. students who enroll in the class for six credits may count them towards their health electives, and/or Transcultural Health class requirement.



Guanajuato, Mexico.

Environmental Health Students

Students in the Environmental Health track are invited to attend the U.S. EPA Region III Emergency Preparedness and Prevention & Hazardous Materials Spills Conference, December 3-6, 2006 at the Valley Forge Convention Plaza, Pa. A limited number of student scholarships are available through the Chester County Local Emergency Planning Committee; see Dr. Chuck Shorten for details. More information about the meeting is online at www.2006conference.org.

Study in the Amazon Rainforest

Plan now to study in the Amazon Rainforest and Machu Picchu with Dr. Roger Mustalish. WCU and the Amazon Center for Environmental Education and Research will offer the following two workshops related to public health:

March 10-18 (spring break): **Ecology and Culture of the Amazon and Machu Picchu.** An introductory workshop open to all, no prerequisites, to explore the ecology, culture, and health and healing traditions of the Andean highlands and the Amazon rainforest. Study in rural Andean and rainforest native villages; learn about medicinal plants; explore remote mountain and rainforest ecosystems; visit the Lost City of the Incas, Machu Picchu. Three graduate credits available. *Note: WCU will prepay all travel costs for M.P.H. students.*

May 2007 (exact dates to be published later): **Conservation Medicine.** This is a new emerging field in the medical sciences dealing with the interface of ecosystem health, animal health and human health. Learn how decisions about uses of natural resources impact spatial distributions of human diseases. Compare global health concerns like malaria, global warming, and bird flu to those here at home, e.g., Lyme disease and West Nile virus. Be better prepared to make informed decisions as a policy maker, educator, or clinician relating to the role of conservation in human health. Three credits available. *Note: WCU will prepay all travel costs for M.P.H. students.*

Contact Dr. Roger Mustalish, rmustalish@wcupa.edu, or Marguerite Gould, mgould@wcupa.edu, for more details and costs.

Faculty Research

Dr. Dee Bill continues to be involved in maternal and child health research projects in Chester County working with the Maternal and Child Health Care Consortium (MCHC). She was the invited keynote speaker at the Healthy Start 10th Anniversary MCHC annual luncheon meeting, June 8, 2006, Chester Valley Golf Club, Malvern, Pa. Her presentation, which was the result of a decade of evaluative research with MCHC's Health Start program, was entitled "Ten Years of Healthy Start in Chester County: Report of Impact, Accomplishments & Lessons Learned."



Faculty Accomplishments

Dr. Gopal Sankaran was honored with the West Chester University 2006 Civility Award. President Madeleine Wing Adler presented the award during her fall Welcome Back Address on September 5.

In addition, Dr. Sankaran presented two papers at the 134th annual meeting of the American Public Health Association held in Boston, Mass., in November 2006. He made an oral presentation, *Teaching cultural competence: Preparing college students for the real world*. He also presented a poster session, *Promoting the rights of children: Evidence based policy and practice for preventing MTCT of HIV in developing nations*.

Dr. Sankaran was elected a governing councilor of the American Public Health Association for a two-year term through the International Health section.



Above: President Madeleine Wing Adler presents Dr. Gopal Sankaran with the Civility Award.

Welcome Professor Metz

Stacie Metz, Ph.D., M.P.H., M.S.W., M.A. recently joined the faculty in the Department of Health as an assistant professor after completing her doctorate in health services research from Saint Louis University. Prior to accepting her current position, she worked as a program evaluation consultant at the CORE Foundation in Chicago, Ill., and a data manager and statistical analyst for a variety of chronic disease and community health projects. She teaches both undergraduate and graduate public health courses, with primary M.P.H. teaching responsibilities in biostatistics and program evaluation. In addition to her appointment at the Department of Health, she is currently serving as a quality improvement evaluation consultant for the Brandywine Health Foundation in Coatesville, Pa., and continues to work on several manuscripts. Her research interests include the interpretation and practice implications of health-related quality of life for persons living with chronic health conditions, health/mental health program design and evaluation, and application of research methodology and advanced statistical modeling techniques. Topics of special interest include HIV/AIDS, adolescent health/mental health, and predictors of medication adherence. Dr. Metz has written and co-written several peer-reviewed articles and presented at international conferences. She is currently a member of the American Public Health Association, International Society for Quality of Life Research, and AcademyHealth.



Dr. Stacie Metz joins the Integrative Health Track

CHES Exam

The CHES (Certified Health Education Specialist) exam will be offered in April. All students in the community health track are eligible for the exam. Courses such as Program Planning, Program Evaluation, Community as a Basis for Health, Transcultural Health, and Program Administration in Health/Human Service have been designed to address the competencies of the health education specialist. Students interested in taking the exam in the spring should apply now. The National Commission for Health Education's Web site, <http://www.nchec.org>, is the sponsor of the exam and has the application forms online.

Poster Session

The M.P.H. Poster Session is scheduled for December 8, 6 - 8 p.m. in the Sykes Student Union Ballroom. All students are encouraged to attend to review the student projects from the Applied Learning Experiences for fall semester, 2006.

Course Scheduling Changes

HEA526 Biostatistics in Public Health has been moved to the fall semester. HEA630 Health Administration has been moved to the spring semester. Courses schedules may change; advising sheets may not always reflect these changes, and it is important for students to check with their advisors for changes in course rotations.

M.P.H. Receives 7 Year Accreditation

The M.P.H. program is now fully accredited for seven years from the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH). We completed a successful site visit in March 2006 and recently received official notification on accreditation status. We now join the growing number of programs that are fully accredited throughout the country. Students can check the status of any accredited M.P.H. program through CEPH's Web site (<http://www.CEPH.org>). The department chairperson (Dr. Roger Mustalish) and the M.P.H. program director (Dr. Lynn Carson) wish to thank the M.P.H. faculty, students, alumni and community members who worked throughout last year on the CEPH Accreditation Report and participated in site visit activities that resulted in a successful outcome.

Some important changes will take place within the M.P.H. program, which are currently under review by West Chester University's CAPC committee. If approved by CAPC, the new program will go into effect fall semester, 2007. All students currently enrolled in the M.P.H. Program will follow their current curriculum. The new program changes will only be for the new students accepted for fall semester, 2007. The proposed M.P.H. program will be 45 credits. The credit increase will include a course in Research Methods in Public Health, Applied Learning Experience I, Applied Learning Experience II and an additional open elective for each track.

Student Membership in Professional Organizations

M.P.H. students have the opportunity to be an active member of a number of professional organizations in the public health field. All students currently enrolled in the M.P.H. program can become a member of the Pennsylvania Public Health Association for free as membership is waived for students. The faculty strongly encourages students to become members of this important organization that helps promote the health and welfare of the citizens of Pennsylvania. Students can obtain directions for membership on PPHA's Web site: <http://www.ppha.org>

Other professional organizations include the American Public Health Association; the Society for Public Health Education; American Association for Health Education; the American School Health Association; and the International Union of Health Education and Promotion. Check out the Web sites for information on reduced membership fees for students.

Joining a professional organization provides numerous benefits, including networking, career placement services, professional growth and development along with the opportunity to serve as a volunteer on various committees that can help students gain experience working with public health professionals.

The Applied Learning Experience

The Applied Learning Experience is a 300-hour practicum in a community setting. Students will complete a major project that will result in a culminating experience (a research report and a poster to be presented to faculty, community members and students at the end of the semester). All M.P.H. core and elective courses need to be completed before the start of the Applied Learning Experience.

Students who are planning their Applied Learning Experience for summer and fall semesters, 2007 need to select a faculty advisor and complete their site placement arrangements during spring semester, 2007. Students need to obtain their copy of the Applied Learning Experience Guidelines (available electronically or through the Department of Health's secretary, Ms. Bobbi Bottoms. These guidelines provide important details on student requirements along with all of the forms needed for site placement. Answers to many of the students' questions about the Applied Learning Experience are found within these guidelines. Students should read the guidelines before making an appointment with their faculty advisor.

Students cannot make a commitment to a site placement unless the site has been approved by the faculty advisor.

Save the Rainforest!

Want to help save the Amazon Rainforest? It's easy and won't cost you a penny! The next time you need to search the Web, use Goodsearch instead of other search engines. Go to <http://www.goodsearch.com>. Before beginning your search, register to support the Amazon Center for Environmental Education and Research by typing in ACEER when prompted to identify the charity you wish to help. That's it! Then use Goodsearch, powered by Yahoo, and each time you do, one cent is donated to ACEER by Goodsearch. That penny may not sound like a lot, but if all of you adopted Goodsearch, the money for ACEER would really add up. To learn more about ACEER, go to <http://www.aceer.org>. ACEER is near and dear to WCU as its U.S. headquarters is housed in the Sturzebecker Health Sciences Center, and our own Dr. Roger Mustalish is president of ACEER. Save the rainforest - one Internet search at a time! Thanks!



Integrative Health Students

In January, a new advisor list will be distributed for all Integrative Health students. Many of you had Dr. Paul-Stang as your advisor. With his departure and Dr. Stacie Metz's arrival, she and Dr. Roger Mustalish will share advising roles within the Certificate and M.P.H. track. Those of you with particular interest in evidence-based medicine, program evaluation and clinical research will likely be assigned to Dr. Metz. Students interested in international health and complementary medicine, will be assigned to Dr. Mustalish. Note that when you are ready to begin HEA 650 Applied Learning Experience, you may also work with other faculty in the department as your placement advisor. For example, many integrative health students interested in working on a nutrition-related topic will often work with one of our nutrition faculty, e.g., Dr. Jeffrey Harris, Dr. Sandra Gross, Dr. Janet Lacey or Professor Lynn Monahan, or Lacey. Identification of your Applied Learning Experience faculty advisor will be determined at the time you submit your application to either Dr. Metz or Mustalish.

Course Rotations Changes Coming

The fall 2007 course schedule will include schedule and rotation changes in M.P.H. core and elective courses. These changes are required to bring the program into compliance with new Council on Education for Public Health mandates and will supersede all existing advising sheets. New advising sheets will be produced once the rotations are set. Note that while the new curriculum of 45 credits including a new research methods course and expanded applied learning experience is expected to go into effect in fall 2007...THESE NEW REQUIREMENTS ARE ONLY FOR NEW STUDENTS ADMITTED INTO THE M.P.H. IN THE FALL 2007 AND LATER. ALL EXISTING STUDENTS WILL FOLLOW THE 36-CREDIT PROGRAM INTO WHICH THEY WERE ADMITTED. As many of you plan courses semesters in advance, please be prepared to adjust to the new course rotations.

New Faculty Searches Are Underway

Three new tenure track faculty join the Department of Health in 2007. Searches are currently underway in **epidemiology, community nutrition, and health advocacy.**

Environmental Health Announcements

The environmental health program at WCU has recently joined the Association of Environmental Health Academic Programs (AEHAP) as an associate member, a first step towards accreditation with Environmental Health Accredited Programs (EHAC). AEHAP provides the administrative and organizational structure for colleges and universities pursuing accreditation of their graduate and undergraduate environmental health programs while EHAC provides the academic review and awards the accreditation. We are currently investigating our options for pursuing accreditation of both undergraduate and graduate programs which will result in stronger offerings and enhanced, national recognition for our students. More information about AEHAP and EHAC can be found at <http://www.aehap.org/>. Please contact Dr. Chuck Shorten, director of environmental health programs, for more information about the accreditation process and its benefits to you as current students, alumni and practicing environmental health professionals.

WCU environmental health students who completed the summer 2006 Water Quality and Health course had to create a website to present their report on the water quality of the East Branch Brandywine Creek. For two weeks in July, students collected samples and conducted laboratory tests in an effort to characterize the status of this important stream in Chester County, Pa. The East Branch Brandywine Creek provides drinking water for thousands of southeastern Pennsylvania residents in communities including West Chester University, the Borough of West Chester and surrounding municipalities. It also provides recreation for fisherman, boaters and nature lovers alike. You can examine this outstanding student report at <http://locker.wcupa.edu/shorten/>.

Right: Graduate students Christine Brisbin (M.P.H., environmental health) and Kristi Reuss (M.S., biology) share the dissolved oxygen meter readings during field sampling along the East Branch Brandywine Creek, July 2006.



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REMINDER

Students are strongly encouraged to submit news, views and experiences for publication in the M.P.H. Connections. Please contact Dr. Gopal Sankaran (gsankaran@wcupa.edu) Or Chrissie Mullett (cm570080@wcupa.edu) with any questions.