

SHU MPH NEWS

*Updates from the Sacred Heart University
Masters in Public Health Program*



IN THIS ISSUE

GRANTS AWARDED

STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

STUDY ABROAD IN OAXACA, MEXICO

MPH ADVISORY BOARD

FACULTY SCHOLARSHIP AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Program Director's Letter

We did it! We not only survived in our first year of the MPH program, we thrived! It was an exciting and busy year as we enrolled our first cohort of MPH students. We also welcomed two outstanding faculty members to the SHU community, Dr. Sofia Pendley and Dr. Jackie Vernarelli. In this newsletter, we share with you some of the highlights from our first year. We include links throughout so that you can get additional detail on topics in which you are interested. We hope you enjoy the newsletter as much as we enjoyed the journey.

- Anna E. Greer, Ph.D, MCHES

Grants Awarded to the MPH Program

Dr. Greer and Dr. Pendley received \$15,000.00 from The Nature Conservancy through funding provided by the JPB Foundation to support Youth Leaders from Make the Road Connecticut as they advocate for Safer Routes to School in Bridgeport and beyond. The Streetscape shown on the right was developed by MRCT Youth as a part of their advocacy efforts.



Dr. Greer and Dr. Pendley were named the Lead Evaluators on a four-year grant Green Village Initiative received from the US Department of Agriculture. The grant provides \$400,000 over four years to support the development of a Just Food System in Bridgeport, CT. This grant will provide support for an MPH graduate research assistant annually from 2019-2023.

Dr. Vernarelli is collaborating on a pilot grant with Dr. Kasia Kordas and others from the NIH-funded Clinical and Translational Science Institute at Buffalo to investigate whether certain dietary patterns are associated with high blood lead levels among low-income toddlers. The pilot grant seeks to pave the way for future community health interventions.

Dr. Greer and Dr. Pendley, in collaboration with Dr. Jessica Samuolis from the SHU Psychology program, received a University Research and Creativity Grant (\$2700) to support their ongoing work for the SHU emotional well-being study. This project is a collaboration with the SHU Wellness Center.

Dr. Greer and Dr. Kerry Morgan (Health Science undergraduate program) received a \$11,500 grant funded by Southern Connecticut to examine vaping on SHU's Campus and develop an intervention to increase awareness about vaping among SHU students.

know the risks.
know the resources.
kNOw Vape.



Student Scholarship & Community Engagement

Rebecca DiSarro has been working on an epidemiological study with Dr. Vernarelli using data from the NHANES-National Youth Fitness Survey. Her research was selected for presentation at the American Society for Nutrition's national meeting, which will be held in Baltimore this June. She will be presenting findings on dietary patterns and cardiovascular health in children.

Gabrielle Diaz co-authored an abstract which was presented at the 2019 American Academy of Health Behavior's Scientific Meeting. The abstract was titled, 'Vaping Behavior, Outcome Expectations, and Perceived Norms among College Students.' Gabrielle also provided written testimony in support of a state-wide Tobacco 21 policy and attended an advocacy summit, speaking to one of her state representatives at the capitol in Hartford.

SHU MPH students attended the Bridgeport City Council meeting in the fall of 2018 to advocate for a Tobacco 21 policy in Bridgeport, CT that would raise the age of purchase for all tobacco and related products to 21 years of age. The policy was passed reducing access to tobacco products to youth in Bridgeport!

SHU MPH students attended the 2018 Connecticut Public Health Association annual meeting in Rocky Hill, CT in November, 2018. The MPH students attended talks, networked, and participated in a speed mentoring activity.

Gabrielle Diaz, Rebecca Dissaro, Kylie Elimanco, and Jeanette Fornacci were awarded Graduate Assistantships for the 2018-2019 academic year. The MPH Graduate Assistants work with the MPH faculty gaining valuable hands-on experience conducting public health research.

Study Abroad in Oaxaca, Mexico

Dr. Pendley, in collaboration with Dr. Kerry Morgan from Health Science, developed a new study abroad experience for MPH graduate students and Health Science undergraduate students to Oaxaca, Mexico. The study abroad experience is a collaboration between Sacred Heart University and Simply Smiles. The MPH students are currently fundraising to offset the costs for this trip, which will take place in October, 2019.

MPH Advisory Board

The SHU MPH Program formed its first Advisory Board, made up of a diverse group of public health leaders. We are excited to be working with the Board to strengthen the SHU MPH program! The Advisory Board member profiles can be viewed on the MPH webpage.

MPH Faculty Highlights

Anna E. Greer, Ph.D, MCHES,

- Dr. Greer published two manuscripts related to school gardens. This work was highlighted in the CT Post in the spring, 2019.
- Dr. Greer presented at the 2018 Connecticut Public Health Association meeting, the 2018 American Public Health Association meeting, the 2019 American Academy of Health Behavior meeting and the 2019 International Congress on Physical Activity and Health.
- Dr. Greer is on the Board of Directors for the American Academy of Health Behavior and was named the Co-Editor in Chief for *Health Behavior Research*.



Sofia Curdumi Pendley, Ph.D, CHES

- Dr. Pendley earned her Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES) designation in April, 2019.
- Dr. Pendley was made a member of the Board of Directors for the Connecticut Public Health Association
- Dr. Pendley attended a national workshop on TeamBased Learning. She is integrating Team Based Learning into the Program Planning course.
- Dr. Pendley's study abroad proposal for a trip to Oaxaca, Mexico was approved in the spring, 2019 and will run fall 2020



Jacqueline A. Vernarelli, Ph.D

- Dr. Vernarelli's recently published article looking at the impact of the Dietary Guidelines and USDA's MyPlate program received national press.
- Dr. Vernarelli will present two studies at the American Society of Nutrition's annual meeting in June, 2019, including one co-authored by a SHU MPH student.
- Dr. Vernarelli currently serves Director of Research Education & Consultation for the College of Health Professions at SHU