

THE BRIDGE

A monthly newsletter connecting CSUN public health students, faculty, alumni, and communities



Photo by [Olivia Barkwill](#), 2023

A Message From the Editors

Hello Alumni, Students, Faculty, and Community Partners-

The Spring 2024 semester is in full swing! It's been a rainy start to the semester, and I hope you and your family are safe and sound as we weather the storms.

In this issue of The Bridge, the team and I are happy to share exciting Public Health Program updates, alumni, faculty, and student spotlights, and news you can use under the calendar and "This is Public Health" sections. I also want to draw your attention to the expanded wellness section of this issue. This spring, the undergraduate interns working with The Bridge will be taking the lead on sharing the latest health information on a variety of topics and themes. For the first issue of the spring semester, BSPH student, Saman Fayaz Rad, has done a wonderful job highlighting Cancer Prevention Month. The wellness section will provide general cancer prevention strategies, and page 3 will specifically cover skin cancer prevention.

We hope you enjoy this issue and as always, we welcome your

suggestions.

Take care,

Dr. Carla Valdez and The Bridge Team

Newsletter Highlights

Wellness Series-
Cancer Prevention

Program Updates

Faculty, Alumni,
Student Spotlights

This is Public Health

March Calendar



CANCER PREVENTION MONTH



The month of February is dedicated to sharing ways in which cancer can be prevented. According to the [American Association for Cancer Research](#), the government estimates that nearly 2 million Americans were diagnosed with cancer during 2023, and more than 600,000 died from the disease. Research shows that more than 40 percent of these cases and nearly half of the deaths can be attributed to preventable causes – smoking, excess body weight, physical inactivity, and excessive exposure to the sun, among others. Below are recommendations provided by the [American Institute for Cancer Research](#) to reduce the risk of cancer.



EAT YOUR GREENS

Aim to include whole grains, vegetables, fruits, and legumes, such as beans and lentils, as a major part of your diet. A healthy pattern of eating and drinking is associated with a lower risk of cancer. You can reduce your risk of developing cancer by following these recommendations.

EXERCISE

Walking more and sitting less is a great way to reduce cancer risk. The more active you are, the greater the benefit. The [SRC](#) on campus is a great facility to incorporate more exercise in your daily life.



MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WEIGHT

Keep your weight within the healthy range and avoid weight gain in adult life. The [evidence](#) linking body fat to cancer is overwhelming and has grown stronger over the past decade.



LIMIT SUGARY BEVERAGE INTAKE

Drink mostly water and unsweetened drinks. There is strong [evidence](#) that regularly drinking sugar-sweetened drinks is a cause of weight gain, overweight, and obesity. Greater body fat is a cause of at least 12 cancers.



REDUCE RED MEAT CONSUMPTION

Eat no more than moderate amounts (12-18 ounces per week) of red meat, such as beef, pork, and lamb. Eat little, if any, processed meat. There is strong [evidence](#) that eating red or processed meat is a cause of colorectal cancer.



SKIN WELLNESS

This month's wellness section is geared towards Cancer Prevention Month and the most common form of cancer in the United States- skin cancer. As the days get warmer and the UV levels increase, it is important to take necessary precautions while still allowing yourself to acquire Vitamin D.

Most skin cancers are caused by too much exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays. UV rays come from the sun, tanning beds, and sunlamps. To lower your risk of getting skin cancer, you can protect your skin from UV rays from the sun, and avoid artificial sources of UV exposure like tanning beds and sunlamps.



1 in 5 Americans develop skin cancer in their lifetime.

SCREENING

Check your skin regularly for new moles or suspicious changes. Be sure to take note of spots on your body and report to a doctor if they are changing, itching, or bleeding. Let a professional know if you are at increased risk for skin cancer.

Anyone can get skin cancer, but take extra precautions if you have:

- blonde or red hair.
- blue or green eyes.
- a family history of skin cancer.
- a light natural skin color.
- skin that burns, freckles, or reddens easily.



APPLY SPF

Use a sunscreen, of at least 30 SPF, 15 minutes before going outdoors. Even on cloudy days, up to 80% of the sun's harmful UV rays can penetrate the clouds. Reapply every two hours, and don't neglect your hands, feet, ears, and top of your head.



SEEK SHADE

UV rays are strongest between 10 AM and 4 PM, so stay in the shade. Additionally, wear clothing that covers your arms and legs and sunglasses to block UVA and UVB rays.



PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAM UPDATES

**Congratulations to the 2024
Jerome Richfield
Memorial Fellow:
Dr. Patty Kwan**



The Bridge is pleased to share that CSUN's Research and Sponsored Programs announced that Dr. Patchareeya (Patty) Kwan has been named the 2024 Jerome Richfield Memorial Fellow. The announcement from Research and Sponsored Programs stated, "Dr. Kwan is a highly accomplished scholar with a focus on Asian American and Pacific Islander health using mixed-methods, community-based research approaches. Her research, particularly the NIH-funded SEA US, HEAR US Study, addresses the health disparities faced by Southeast Asian Americans (SEA) in Greater Los Angeles, emphasizing the importance of disaggregating data to understand the diverse needs of SEA subgroups. Dr. Kwan's work extends to mentoring students and faculty, promoting research culture, and contributing significantly to the BUILD PODER program, aimed at diversifying the biomedical research workforce. She is recognized for her impactful publications, presentations, and community service that contribute to social change in science, health, and healthcare. The Richfield Memorial Fellow celebrates a CSUN faculty member engaged in high-quality, high-impact research."

We congratulate Dr. Kwan on this well-deserved recognition. Dr. Kwan will present a lecture in the spring semester (date to be determined) as part of the Provost Colloquium Series and we will share that information once the date is announced.



**We are Proud to Share that CSUN's Master of Public Health (MPH) Program was
Ranked #9 for Best Online MPH Programs!**



[Click here](#) for more information about CSUN's Online MPH Program. Applications are now being accepted! The priority deadline is March 19, 2024 and final deadline is May 28, 2024.

PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAM UPDATES

Congratulations to Dr. Mirna Troncoso Sawyer on being named the Director of the Institute for Community Health and Wellbeing!

The Institute for Community Health and Wellbeing (ICHWB) is a collaborative of campus and community members committed to enhancing the health and wellbeing of individuals, families, organizations, and communities within California State University, Northridge's service region. The primary mission of the Institute for Community Health and Wellbeing is to foster healthful living through community and campus partnerships.

Dr. Mirna Sawyer was recently appointed Director of the CSUN's Institute for Community Health and Wellbeing. For several years, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the ICHWB played an inward-facing role—to support campus faculty, staff, and students. The ICHWB's original mandate was to facilitate campus-community partnerships. And now post-pandemic, the ICHWB is resuming its outward-facing role.

As Director, Dr. Sawyer will primarily be connecting with the community; identifying unmet community needs; and cultivating and facilitating internal/external partnerships and community funding.



“One of the things I am most looking forward to is connecting with a wide array of community groups, organizations, and people. What concerns or issues are unaddressed? Do we have expertise on our campus to address these needs? Are there additional ways CSUN can be an intellectual, economic, and cultural resource for the community?”

-Dr. Mirna Sawyer





Summer 2024



Attention BSPH Students!

This summer, we will be offering several state-supported Public Health courses! All courses will be delivered online and some are completely asynchronous, meaning they can work around YOUR schedule. Make sure to check with Financial Aid about funding options.

[How and when to register for summer courses.](#)

SESSION 1
(05/24/24-08/20/24)

- HSCI 391 Computer Application in Health Sciences
- HSCI 441 Public Health Program Planning
- HSCI 445 Program Evaluation for Health Education
- HSCI 494PH Internship Public Health

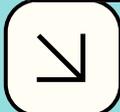
SESSION 2
(05/24/24-07/9/24)

- HSCI 314 Organization and Delivery of Health Services
- HSCI 336 Health Aspects of Drug Use
- HSCI 345 Public Health Issues
- HSCI 390/L Biostatistics and Lab
- HSCI 431 Health Behavior Theory
- HSCI 437 Effective Strategies and Methods for Public Health Practice
- HSCI 439 Community Health Action
- HSCI 465ELM Teaching Health in the Elementary School Classroom
- HSCI 466ADO Health Issues of the Adolescent
- HSCI 494IPH Internship Evaluation Public Health

SESSION 3
(07/10/24-08/20/24)

- HSCI 336 Health Aspects of Drug Use
- HSCI 345 Public Health Issues
- HSCI 390/L Biostatistics and Lab
- HSCI 434 Lactation Education: Prenatal and Perinatal Period
- HSCI 488 Epidemiology

Need help with planning your academic schedule or deciding which summer classes to take? Please reach out to one of our Public Health Advisors



Josefina Gudino
Office: JD 2554

Moises Hernandez
Office: JD 2550

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Stephanie Benjamin



Dr. Benjamin is currently serving as the Public Health Program Director and the Academic Lead of the Tseng MPH Program. Dr. Benjamin grew up in Los Alamitos, CA, and then attended the University of Pennsylvania and graduated with a B.A. in Biological Basis of Behavior. Dr. Benjamin then attended the Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine for graduate school. While there, she received an MPH in Biostatistics and Epidemiology and a Ph.D. in Epidemiology.

Dr. Benjamin's next move was to Atlanta, GA where she worked as an Epidemiologist for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the Division of Diabetes Translation in the Epidemiology and Surveillance Branch. Dr. Benjamin's last move was back to CA to be closer to her family - and she began her journey at CSUN! Dr. Benjamin began working at CSUN as a lecturer in 2007 and was hired as a full-time faculty member in 2013.

Following the recent announcement that CSUN ranks among the best online MPH programs, we contacted Dr. Benjamin to hear her perspective as the Public Health Program Director and Academic Lead of the Tseng MPH Program. Here is what Dr. Benjamin shared:

The online MPH program was recently identified as a top 10 online program. What makes our online program unique?

What makes our online program so unique is how accommodating it is for individuals who work full-time. The majority of our students have full-time jobs and can successfully complete our MPH Program due to it being fully online and flexible. Another factor is the cohort model. By having cohorts, students spend the entire 2.5-year program with the same group of students, which creates a supportive, family-like environment. We also have an excellent and experienced faculty teaching the courses!

Describe your role as program director and academic lead (for Tseng). What motivated you to become the program director for the MPH public health program?

In my roles as Public Health Program Director and Academic Lead of the Tseng MPH Program, I have the opportunity to work with students and faculty to create a positive and effective learning environment. My overarching goal with both programs is for students to graduate from CSUN with the skills necessary to thrive and be successful working in the field of Public Health.



What's your favorite part about working with students? Faculty?

My favorite part of CSUN is the people! I'm continuously inspired by our students and faculty who are so committed to working hard to improve the health of our communities while also looking out for each other. I also love the diversity of both the students and faculty at CSUN; it is what makes CSUN so special.

What factors influenced your decision to pursue a career in public health?

Factors that influenced my decision to pursue a career in public health were my love of math (my favorite undergraduate class was biostatistics!) and desire to work in the health field. I love that the work we do in public health can positively influence the health of entire populations.



What advice can you offer public health students, especially those who hope to attend an MPH program?

My advice for students is to try to enjoy the journey and especially the people. Being a student can be challenging and stressful, but I encourage you to form as many relationships as possible with your peers, mentors, and professors. These relationships can be immensely helpful to you both personally and professionally in the future. I still cherish my relationships with former professors, mentors, and friends from my undergraduate and graduate years and they have helped shape who I am today.

Is there anything else you'd like to share with our readers?

I want to take this opportunity to promote our outstanding CSUN MPH Programs and encourage our graduating seniors to apply. On campus, we have two MPH tracks, one with a concentration in Applied Epidemiology and one with a concentration in Community Health Education. Additionally, we have a fully online MPH Program with a concentration in Community Health Education. We are accepting applications through the end of May 2024. For students who are interested in working in the field of public health, getting an MPH is a great opportunity to gain more skills, knowledge, and hands-on experience in the field as well as make you more competitive in the job market. Getting an MPH degree can also be useful for students who eventually want to go to graduate school for medicine, dentistry, nursing, etc. Having an MPH can enhance your application and provide you with important skills and knowledge you can use in your future career.





CSUN

HEALTH
SCIENCES

MASTER OF
PUBLIC HEALTH

Championing Health. Enhancing Lives.

Concentrations in **Community Health Education**
and **Applied Epidemiology**

Accredited since 1971, the CSUN Master of Public Health (MPH) Program offers students applied skills, supportive mentorship, community partnerships, and a welcoming, inclusive environment. Our programs are geared towards working professionals who are passionate about improving the health of communities.

Applications Now Open
Due May 1st



master of public health

COMMUNITY HEALTH EDUCATION

Enhance Health Through Knowledge

Join us for an information session:

Tuesday, March 5, 2024, 6 – 7 p.m. PST

Tuesday, April 16, 2024, 6 – 7 p.m. PDT



GET THE DETAILS ON

- › Application Process
- › Admission Requirements
- › Tuition & Fees
- › Curriculum
- › Faculty

RSVP TODAY

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Online via Zoom



Learn More

(818) 273-6877

programs@csun.edu

go.csun.edu/aboutMPH

CSUN

CALIFORNIA
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ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Ryan Skaggs, MPH, CHES

Ryan Skaggs, Chief of the Office of School Health at the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), works to advance health, wellness, and safe in-person instruction for California's 7.5 million students and staff within the state's 10,000 TK-12 schools.

He has a Bachelor of Science degree in Public Health from California State University, Los Angeles, and in 2020 graduated with a Master of Public Health from California State University, Northridge (Tseng College). He has a background in environmental justice, community organizing, non-profit management, and HIV client services.

Ryan first came to CDPH as a student intern in 2017. Since then, he has served in a variety of roles including CDPH's Strategic Planning Coordinator and Internship Coordinator. He has experience working in children's public health programs including serving as a Program Consultant with the Office of Oral Health.



“Ending up in the job of your dreams usually doesn't happen overnight. Just enjoy the ride because it can take years to build your impact.”

What made you choose the online Tseng program?

I was at a crossroads in my life and career, so the flexibility of the Tseng program was a huge appeal to me. When I first started the program, I had recently moved from LA to Sacramento to work for CDPH. I needed a program that I could attend no matter where I was living or how busy I got with my career. I already knew some of the faculty from CSUN, and they were a big part of my decision as well. The Tseng program provided me with a high-quality education with relatively affordable tuition.

How did your time in the program help influence your public health professional Journey?

The program gave my career an extra boost that I believe has helped me promote more quickly at CDPH. As a public health professional, I've become stronger in both the administrative and public health program areas of my work. As a result of the courses I took and opportunities I was exposed to in the Tseng program, such as the Clinton Global Initiative University, my life has become richer. I no longer have any doubts that public health is the right career for me.

Do you have any advice for students in their final semester?

Try to think positively and make the most out of the time you have left at CSUN. Use your network of highly connected professionals to take action on the opportunities around you including internships, volunteer experiences, or research. Finally don't compare your career path to others!

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Julianna Ruelas

Julianna Ruelas is a Master of Public Health student at the Tseng College at CSUN. Julianna came to the online MPH program with an undergraduate degree in Kinesiology. She is passionate about finding ways to promote healthy lifestyles through research, disease detection, and disease prevention.

Julianna is expected to graduate in December 2024.



“To me, Public Health means being able to protect our society and all communities through education and increasing their quality of life.”

Why did you choose the online MPH program? Why did you decide to pursue graduate studies in public health?

I chose this program because I knew I wanted to further my education in the Public Health field, and later work with my community to prevent disease and illness. Having been in nursing school I realized I didn't want to be at the patient's bedside, instead, I wanted to focus on the prevention of disease through education and resources. This was the main reason I left nursing school and pursued another route. This program has truly given me the tools I need to ensure I can do that for my community.

What has your experience been like in the Tseng program?

It's been a good experience! I like that the professors are understanding of the fact we aren't just students, but also full-time employees and/or parents. However, this does not stop them from challenging us, which I also enjoy! The online part of the program turned out to be both a challenge and a blessing. With a toddler at home, I sometimes experienced difficulty in paying attention. However, the online program made it possible for me to attend school while being a single mother with no childcare.

How did your time in the program help influence your public health professional journey?

Being in this program has expanded my knowledge and understanding of public health. I didn't really know just how versatile a degree in public health can be and thanks to the extremely knowledgeable professors I have had, and opportunities such as the internship, I know I can use this degree to help my community. This has brought an eagerness and excitement back to my life!

THIS IS PUBLIC HEALTH

**National Library of Medicine
Discovery podcast with Host:
Yamila El-Khayat**

A detailed explanation of how the Network of the National Library of Medicine is engaging with communities to provide access to trusted information for the purpose of improving the public's health.

**“Tell us where it hurts” with
host: Kristina Kirschner**

Community Health Network in Central Indiana explores health, well-being, and the ways people are offering a helping hand.



The Bridge will share recommended readings, podcasts, and job/internship opportunities every month. Click the underlined hyperlinks below to learn more.



Prevention is Still the Best Medicine

Read this month’s “Health and Wellbeing Matter” Blog written by the Director of the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion.

Experiences w/ anxiety or depression? You are not alone!

Read this informative article on the statistics of adolescents reporting symptoms of anxiety or depression and what those receiving help are saying.

How Midwifery is Essential to Black Maternal Healthcare

Read about the nurse-midwives at CHOICES Center for Reproductive Health in Memphis, TN, and how they are working to change the healthcare system by providing Black mothers a space for culturally relevant and community-based reproductive healthcare

READ MORE



**SAVE
THE DATE**

**March 6-7 th:
Sexual Health Update
2024 | Essential Access
Health Conference**

Join Essential Access Health for their first in-person clinical conference in four years!

**March 7th:
UC Global Health Day 2024**

Join The UC Global Health Institute (UCGHI) for UC Global Health Day 2024. This year, celebrate “Making Change: Creating Health Equity Through Policy and Advocacy” on March 7th in Los Angeles, CA. Get your tickets [here!](#)

**Association of Schools &
Programs of Public health
internships**

[ASPPH/CDC Public Health Fellowship Program](#). Learn more [here!](#)

The Carter Center Internships

Health internship positions are available in the following program areas:

[International Public Health »](#)

[Mental Health Program »](#)



APPLY NOW

SAVE THE DATE



Protecting, Connecting and Thriving: *We Are All Public Health*

APRIL 1-7, 2024



NATIONAL
**PUBLIC
HEALTH
WEEK**

AN INITIATIVE OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

**National Public Health
Week 2024
CSUN Events:**

Youth Mental Health First
Aid (YMHFA) Training
Health Fair
QPR Training

and more!

National Public Health Week (NPHW), an initiative of the American Public Health Association (APHA), occurs annually during the first week of April. National Public Health Week is “a time to recognize the contributions of public health and highlight issues that are important to improving our nation's health.”

Join the CSUN Health Sciences Department, and our campus and community partners in a week of events to raise awareness about public health and prevention locally and across the nation. More info coming soon!

MARCH 2024



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3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

7 UC Global Health Day 2024

8  International Women's Day

18 Global Recycling Day 

18-24  Spring Recess

19-20 Maternal Health Forum: Small Steps and Giant Leaps for Maternal and Mental Health Care

19-21 SOPHE Annual Conference 



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Click the link below to subscribe to our email list and get monthly access to our newsletters!

SIGN UP 

GOT A STORY TO SHARE?

Let's stay informed! Contribute to The Bridge by filling out our content form so we all stay updated and connected!

