7.5 BILLION REASONS TO BELIEVE IN PUBLIC HEALTH

2017 PROGRESS REPORT

Milken Institute School of Public Health
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY 1997-2017
As we celebrate the 20th anniversary of Milken Institute School of Public Health, I find myself reflecting on all that we’ve accomplished and the leaders—some of whom offer their own reflections on the pages that follow—that helped make it possible.

We have come a long way since our days as a small program tucked within the School of Medicine in Ross Hall, but our history and fighting spirit have made us who we are today—an independent, top-ranked public health research and education powerhouse. And with the recent arrival of the university’s 17th President, Dr. Thomas J. LeBlanc, our majestic institution is prepared to aspire to preeminence as a comprehensive global research university.

As public health practitioners, we are often leaders charting a course through uncertain waters driven by an instinctual passion for helping those who are most vulnerable. We step outside our comfort zone, challenge the status quo, and raise our voices for those who aren’t heard. In public health, we never stand by and turn a blind eye to the needs of others. We dive in head first and make personal and professional sacrifices to improve the circumstances of the less fortunate.

Three years after our school received the transformative $80 million gift from the Milken Institute, the Sumner M. Redstone Charitable Foundation and the Milken Family Foundation, we continue to lead the way in public health research and education. The gift contributed to the university surpassing its $1 billion Making History campaign goal this year—more than one year ahead of schedule.

Milken Institute SPH’s research spending reached nearly $85 million this year, and our programs have been nationally recognized for quality in education. The Master of Health Administration program was honored by the Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Management Education and Baylor Scott & White Health for training our students to be leaders in the health care field.

Through our cutting-edge research in prevention and wellness conducted in state-of-the-art facilities at 950 New Hampshire Avenue and in the Science and Engineering Hall (SEH), we’re addressing current, emerging and future challenges in public health from AIDS to superbugs. We’ve been able to recruit top investigators, who are excellent researchers and instructors in our classrooms and our labs, in the various public health disciplines.

Being an institution of higher education, we value collaboration and learning from others, and this year had the honor of
welcoming a number of leaders and experts including Cecile Richards, president of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America and Planned Parenthood Action Fund, and Camara Jones, immediate past president of the American Public Health Association, during National Public Health Week. Roslyn Brock, the youngest person and fourth woman to serve as chairman of the National Board of Directors for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, delivered a rousing and inspirational 2017 commencement address; and I, along with other faculty from the school, again participated in the Milken Institute Global Conference with experts the world over.

Looking to the future of public health, it will take real leaders to navigate the field. It will take rigorous and systemic research and evaluation of population-level interventions to determine how to best serve society. So while I’m proud of all the school has achieved, now is not the time to rest on our laurels.

Milken Institute SPH is not really 20 years old—we are really 20 years young. As such, we are still developing at a very rapid pace, pushing the envelope on research—building upon basic research findings and creating innovative solutions that will have positive health outcomes. Our faculty and students are continuously challenging one another academically. We are constantly evolving and redesigning a curriculum that will educate and train students to be the world’s best and brightest public health leaders.

We must never stop growing, learning and evolving, for that is how true leaders are made and the only way to achieve excellence. Thank you to all whose vision, drive and leadership brought us to where we are today. I am so proud of the public health fellowship and community we have built, and with your continued support and guidance, I feel certain that the best is yet to come.

Truly yours,

Lynn R. Goldman
Michael and Lori Milken Dean
Congratulations to the faculty, students and administration of Milken Institute School of Public Health at the George Washington University on 20 years of improving the quality and length of life for people everywhere. Although much work remains because of such disturbing trends as the opioid crisis, obesity-related morbidities and increasing social isolation, Milken Institute SPH is well positioned to address them. It can build on its strengths in many ways:

• **Think like social scientists.** My first speech on Wall Street in 1969 was titled “The best investor is a social scientist.” The same observation applies to many fields. Just as successful investors understand that social trends can be as important as balance sheets, effective public health programs intersect with shifting consumer tastes. Thirty years ago, the most valuable brand in America was Marlboro cigarettes, while today’s brand leaders are companies like Apple, Google and Facebook.

• **Recognize that trends aren’t linear.** In the 1940s, the head of IBM foresaw a global market for about five computers. In 1968, biologist Paul Ehrlich said a population explosion would cause mass starvation and soon reduce U.S. life expectancy to 42 years. On Earth Day 1970, zoologist Kenneth Watt looked at climate trends and predicted a new ice age by the year 2000. Change is constant and unpredictable. Embrace it—even advancing technology—as a means to leverage your efforts.

• **See the forest, not just the trees.** Health care has evolved from treating disease with pills to an increased focus on strengthening the immune system to changing the environment of our organs. An example is precision nutrition, which will be possible with an increased understanding of human microbiomes. Milken Institute SPH leadership in obesity research puts the school at the center of this trend.

• **Emphasize data expertise.** With the cost of data storage and transmission approaching zero and the capabilities of big data expanding, the public health field is on the verge of a tremendous leap forward. Twenty-five years ago we talked about a link between lifestyle and health, but the data to prove the connection was limited. Now that the cost of genome sequencing has fallen more than a million times, we can demonstrate lifestyle’s effects with far greater precision. New technologies even change the genes themselves. This will launch a golden age for public health schools, and with its strength in biostatistics, the Milken Institute SPH will be at the forefront.

• **Understand aging.** The Milken Institute Center for the Future of Aging reports that global aging is an increasingly important social issue. The number of people older than 65 is expected to nearly triple by mid-century, and that has profound implications for public health.

• **Continue to collaborate outside of your silo.** You’re part of a great institution, but there are other excellent schools of public health. There’s much to gain by sharing data and insights. The Milken Institute’s Lynda and Stewart Resnick Center for Public Health is a resource and a hub for these exchanges.

For the last 20 years, you’ve changed the world for the better, and I’m confident you’ll change it in even more important ways over the next 20 years.
As the founding dean of the school, my memories go back to my first days in Washington, DC, in the summer of 1970. I worked on Capitol Hill as an intern and lived in GW’s Thurston Hall. Every day I walked the two miles to the Capitol from GW before the days of the Metro.

During these walks, I wondered, “Why isn’t there a school of public health in the nation’s capital?” My mind began dreaming that maybe someday GW would have a school of public health on Washington Circle, perhaps the best place in the world for such a school.

These dreams began to take shape when I came back to GW, first as a resident and then as a faculty member. I was teaching epidemiology and preventive medicine to medical students and by the mid-1980s saw an opportunity to start an MPH program in the medical school.

The MPH program grew rapidly from 1987 until 1997. We started with programs in epidemiology, health administration, and health promotion, adding new programs every year, including environmental/occupational health, health policy, maternal and child health, international health, and biostatistics.

In 1997 the school was officially created, bringing together the Department of Health Services Management and Policy from the business school, the Exercise Sciences Department from the school of education and the MPH program from the medical school. Merging cultures and creating a truly freestanding school was a challenge during those early days. A small but dedicated and creative group of faculty and deans joined the staff as we added doctoral education, new master’s degrees, and certificate programs and took the then-radical step of offering courses for undergraduates.

We jumpstarted a research program connected to the Center for Health Policy Research and other GW research centers, established the school as “the school of public health in the nation’s capital, and in 1999, gained full accreditation. Looking back, we laid the groundwork for a bright future, one that now includes undergraduate public health degrees and a full range of master’s and doctoral education programs, and a growing research enterprise that now integrates many of GW’s most prominent research centers.

Our beautiful building on Washington Circle has fulfilled the dream I had in 1970 of being part of the only school of public health in the nation’s capital—a school that would prove to play an essential role in the health of the community, the nation and the world.
Being part of the small group led by Dean Richard Riegelman to dream, plan and implement what became our School of Public Health and Health Services was one of the most interesting and exciting aspects of my academic career. There were many skeptics and opponents to the notion to bring the numerous academic components in existence throughout the university together as a new school. Fortunately, a consensus was reached, and the school became a reality in 1997. It was not always easy, but it was a lot of fun!

When I took over from Dean Riegelman, we were faced with the challenge of leading the school from its establishment phase into the next period when there needed to be close attention to structure, processes and procedures. We also needed to ensure that the school was financially sound and prepare for the upcoming CEPH accreditation.

Looking back, one of my proudest academic achievements at GW was the creation of the Center for Health Policy Research while I was chairman of the Department of Health Services Management and Policy.

When I arrived at GW in 1979, I felt that one of our serious gaps was the absence of a unit devoted to health policy research. I envisioned such a center would be intellectually rigorous but with a focus on assisting to solve real-world health policy choices and dilemmas. This was influenced by my background in Australia where I started my academic career as a health policy research assistant in the Centre for Applied Economic and Social Research at the University of Melbourne.

A gift from Dr. and Mrs. Harold Hirsh allowed us to establish the Harold and Jane Hirsh professorship in Health Law and, subsequently, the Center for Health Policy Research. Sara Rosenbaum was appointed as the third Harold and Jane Hirsh Professor of Health Law and second director of the center. It expanded rapidly during my tenure as dean, and it remains a major intellectual resource within the school, now as part of the Department of Health Policy and Management. The center is one of the nation’s premier academic health policy research entities with work that impacts health policy at federal and state government levels as well as the private sector.

I look back on the first 20 years of the school’s life with a mixture of amazement, pride and satisfaction.

My hopes are that the school will continue on its trajectory of excellence in public health teaching, research and service, leveraging its unique position in the nation’s capital to ensure sensible and necessary health policies are developed, implemented and evaluated.

I look forward to celebrating the school’s 50th birthday!
How well I remember my arrival on the GW campus back in 2003. I had chosen to leave my post as associate dean at the Yale University School of Medicine to lead a public health school then just 6 years old. Quite a few of my friends and colleagues wondered if I knew what I was doing, but I recognized an incredible opportunity. Mind you, the school was off to a great start, thanks to the dedication of my predecessors, founding Dean Richard Riegelman and his successor, acting Dean Richard Southby. But inevitably it was also experiencing growing pains. We had no home of our own, instead sharing space with GW’s medical school. Five of our seven departments had acting chairs. And despite our unique position as the only public health school in Washington, DC, many people didn’t know much about us.

Building infrastructure and improving the school’s reputation were my top priorities when I arrived. Within a short time, we had recruited a full complement of department chairs, established a transparent budget process (and balanced the budget annually thereafter), and secured the land on which the school now sits. We also pushed forward the architectural planning for a new building.

Always, my goals were to produce an optimal academic experience for our students, allow faculty to thrive, encourage the creation of knowledge, and establish practice-focused external partnerships. We fired on every cylinder to make all that happen. During my tenure, we redesigned the MPH curriculum, grew the undergraduate program in public health, engaged departments in the admissions process, and established the position of associate dean for academic research. We overhauled the website, created an interactive orientation, and embarked on a rich collaboration with GW’s medical school. A point of special pride was the relationship we developed with the DC Department of Health to support its efforts controlling the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Together, these steps raised the school’s profile and its ranking in U.S. News and World Report. More significantly, they helped to inspire our students, gave faculty new opportunities to shape domestic and global health policy, and sent forth a cadre of professionals determined to build a healthier world. And that, of course, is what this school has always been about.

The great work of public health continues amid threats from infectious agents, a changing climate, and chronic disease looming large. The talent and commitment of GW students training to tackle such challenges was a daily inspiration to me during my time here, and it is immensely reassuring to know they are now directly contributing to the field. I am proud and humbled to have helped lay the foundation at GW to make that possible.

Happy 20th birthday to the Milken Institute School of Public Health: May you continue to lead the way in educating public health professionals long into the future.
In May, Milken Institute SPH leadership and faculty joined world-renowned experts and innovators for the 2017 Milken Institute Global Conference in Los Angeles. The three-day conference explored solutions to some of the world’s most pressing challenges in health, education, government, financial markets and industry sectors.

Dean Goldman helped to tackle issues around the country’s opioid crisis as moderator of a panel discussion exploring addiction and mental health. The six-person panel, representing national nonprofits, pharmaceutical companies and the federal government, delved into topics such as the economic and personal implications of opioid addiction in the U.S. and around the world as well as how potential policy changes and advancements in technology, including artificial intelligence, could help combat this growing issue.

Dean Goldman also served as a panelist for a discussion on the leading role women are taking when it comes to their families’ health decisions and how that impacts the country’s health and the way we live. Meanwhile, William Dietz, director and chair of the Sumner M. Redstone Global Center for Prevention and Wellness and prominent obesity expert, spoke on a panel exploring ways to reduce the health and economic burden of chronic disease.
MILKEN INSTITUTE SPH GOES WEST

While in Los Angeles for the Milken Institute Global Conference, Milken Institute SPH hosted an evening event for local alumni and friends. “Public Health: Setting our Priorities” featured a conversation between Dean Goldman and Mike Milken, chairman of the Milken Institute, on the extraordinary promise of public health as well as three dynamic talks by Milken Institute SPH faculty: Amanda Castel, associate professor of epidemiology and biostatistics; Jeffrey Levi, professor of health policy and management; and Amita Vyas, associate professor of prevention and community health.
For more than seven years, David Michaels led the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the longest term in the agency’s history.

In January, he returned to Milken Institute SPH, where he continues to push for policies that ensure worker safety.

This spring, the environmental and occupational health professor and several students visited the White House Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs to advocate for an OSHA standard that protects workers from exposure to the hazardous metal beryllium.

In June, Michaels joined with experts and former administrators in voicing concern over the proposed Honest and Open New EPA Science Treatment (HONEST) Act, which would restrict the Environmental Protection Agency from using peer-reviewed research in its regulatory activities unless the raw data used was made available.

“Transparency and reproducibility are long-standing priorities in science, and we welcome good-faith efforts to evaluate scientific evidence for use in public policy,” Michaels wrote, along with co-author Thomas Burke, professor at Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, in Science. “But on these issues, the Act is dishonest—an attempt by politicians to override scientific judgment and dictate narrow standards by which science is deemed valuable for policy.”

Michaels was appointed as assistant secretary of labor for occupational safety and health by former President Barack Obama and unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate. While there, he worked to strengthen the agency’s enforcement in high-hazard industries, promote common sense worker protection programs and standards, expand compliance assistance provided to small employers, improve OSHA’s whistleblower protection program, and increase outreach to vulnerable populations that are at greatest risk for work-related injury and illness.
For nearly 60 years, graduates of the Master of Health Administration (MHA) program at Milken Institute SPH have been leading the way in health care delivery and management.

Recently, the program was nationally recognized for its excellence in quality improvement education with an award given by the Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Management Education (CAHME) and Baylor Scott & White Health, the largest nonprofit health care system in Texas.

The first-of-its-kind award, announced in Modern Healthcare, recognizes national leaders in educational programs that provide training on quality improvement in health care to future leaders in the field.

The GW MHA program was honored at the CAHME awards ceremony in March 2017. The award also comes with up to $5,000 in scholarship grants to fund educational materials related to quality improvement and an invitation to Baylor University Robbins Case Competition in Healthcare Management.

“The program’s quality builds on talented students and a dedicated faculty and is reflected in our graduates, who have gone on to successfully manage hospitals and health care organizations around the country,” said Wayne Psek, an assistant professor in the program.
Michael and Lori Milken Dean Lynn R. Goldman has spent much of her career advocating for the importance of environmental health.

As a physician, epidemiologist and environmental health expert, she is a leader in the field and was honored for her significant contributions at the 2016 American Public Health Association meeting, where she received the Homer N. Calver Award. Given by the APHA Environmental Section, the award recognizes an environmental health expert for their significant contributions to the field.

Dean Goldman was also awarded the Walsh McDermott Medal at the 2016 annual meeting of the National Academy of Medicine for distinguished service to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine. Throughout her career, Dean Goldman has chaired or served on numerous committees and forums for the National Academies and has lent her expertise in environmental research and policy as well as activities that focused on the health of Gulf War veterans, the health impacts of genetically engineered food, climate change, and secondhand smoke.

Before taking the helm of Milken Institute SPH, Dean Goldman served as a professor of environmental health sciences at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and her work in academia is complemented by a long track record as an environmental regulator. She was mentored by Herbert Needleman, a pioneer in the medical field who is known for his research on the neurodevelopmental damage caused by lead poisoning.

Between 1993 and 1998, she served as assistant administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention, where she was responsible for the national implementation of chemical and pesticide safety and pollution prevention laws.

She shared some of her experiences working at the EPA during a day-long conference held at Milken Institute SPH in June featuring a keynote address by Sen. Tom Udall (D-N.M.) and celebrating the one-year anniversary of the passage of the Lautenberg Chemical Safety Act. The bipartisan act amended the 1976 Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) and was the first major update to an environmental statute in 20 years.

“When I joined the EPA in 1993 as assistant administrator for toxic substances, I went on record about the urgent need to reform earlier legislation,” Dean Goldman said to the crowd of legislators and chemical and environmental experts. And while the passage of the 2016 act is a move in the right direction, Congress and the EPA need to remain vigilant in ensuring top safety standards, Dean Goldman said.
Community health centers play an essential role in delivering health care to underserved urban and rural populations. Now, a three-year gift of more than $1 million from the RCHN Community Health Foundation (RCHN CHF) in support of the Geiger Gibson Program at Milken Institute SPH will further our understanding of these centers’ function and impact.

“RCHN’s sustained support for the work of the Geiger Gibson Program has propelled the school into a position of true national leadership in research, scholarship, education and leadership training, all with a focus on community health centers and the thousands of medically underserved communities that depend on them,” said Harold and Jane Hirsh Professor of Health Law and Policy Sara Rosenbaum. “We are eternally grateful for this opportunity.”

The latest gift represents a continuation of the foundation’s multi-year, multi-million dollar commitment to the program—a unique academic training and research initiative in the Department of Health Policy and Management.

Program activities have included policy analysis, translational research, support for graduate student research assistantships and young professionals as well as educational events and lectures.

Through the foundation’s support, which now totals more than $5 million, the collaborative program has produced more than four dozen policy research briefs, landmark reports, and an extensive body of peer-reviewed literature and special reports used by federal and state policymakers, news media, and community health centers.

“We are delighted to continue our collaboration with the Milken Institute SPH and extend our support for the signature work of the Geiger Gibson program, which is named after the two founding fathers of the nation’s community health centers, Dr. H. Jack Geiger and Dr. Count Gibson,” said President and CEO of the RCHN Community Health Foundation Feygele Jacobs. “Our investment recognizes the unique role of community health centers in America’s health care system and helps support training for the next generation of scholars and practitioners dedicated to ending health disparities.”
Milken Institute SPH students and faculty are taking advantage of a new, cutting-edge teaching laboratory located in GW’s Science and Engineering Hall (SEH).

The 1,700-square-foot classroom opened in August 2016, and Epidemiology and Biostatistics Professor Jeanne Jordan taught the first lab skills class there this past summer. She said it was wonderful to have a dedicated space that includes incubators, centrifuges, vortexers, micropipettors, a collection of microscopes, biosafety hoods and more. “Much of what you would need for teaching public health microbiology and virology using conventional culture as well as molecular-based testing platforms for identifying pathogens is here now, in a dedicated and beautiful space.”

She also teaches a dry-lab-based public health microbiology class in the space and is excited to use the facility’s resources to show students what they’re learning in real time. To be able to look at bacteria growing on culture plates or under a microscope while listening to a lecture on pathogens, for example, gives that lesson more meaning, Jordan said.

In addition to the teaching lab, the seventh floor of SEH houses 15,260 square feet of research laboratory space belonging to Milken Institute SPH. The labs support the school’s many multidisciplinary research projects in microbiology, virology, environmental and occupational health, analytical chemistry, genomics and bioinformatics, adding a new dimension to the school’s research work.

The seventh floor is also home to the Antibiotic Resistance Action Center and the Computational Biology Institute as well as a biosafety level 3 lab and a DNA sequencing core.
In June, Department Chair of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences Loretta DiPietro received the American College of Sports Medicine’s Citation Award—one of the most prestigious awards offered in the fields of exercise science and sports medicine. The award is granted to an individual or group who has made significant and important contributions to sports medicine and/or the exercise sciences.

One of the first graduate students trained in exercise epidemiology, DiPietro is a widely published researcher and has received grants from the National Institute on Aging and the American Cancer Society. Her research emphasizes the importance of exercise in older women and the associations between physical activity and breast cancer, unhealthy weight gain, and glucose regulation. She’s also examined how the functional changes traditionally associated with aging are similar to those that occur with bedrest and low-gravity conditions such as space flight.

DiPietro is editor-in-chief of the Journal of Physical Activity and Health and is a member of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service’s 2018 Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee and the National Institutes of Health Aging Systems in Geriatrics Study Section.
JOEL TEITELBAUM APPOINTED TO HEALTHY PEOPLE 2030 ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Health Policy and Management Associate Professor Joel Teitelbaum is lending his legal expertise to an advisory committee that will help set national health promotion and disease prevention goals.

He is one of 13 nationally recognized experts appointed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to the Secretary's Advisory Committee on National Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Objectives for 2030.

“Law is one of the most important and complex determinants of health, and I wanted the committee's deliberations to benefit from having a member whose perspective on health promotion was filtered through a legal lens,” says Teitelbaum, who is the first lawyer to serve on a Healthy People Committee.

Every 10 years, the Healthy People initiative draws on scientific evidence to develop objectives aimed at improving the health of all Americans. The initiative also encourages collaborations across communities and sectors, which is something Teitelbaum focuses on in his work as co-director of the National Center for Medical-Legal Partnership, which is based at Milken Institute SPH.

NEW FACULTY

Hannah Arem, PhD, MHS, Assistant Professor of Epidemiology and Biostatistics
Debra Bernat, PhD, MA, Associate Professor in Epidemiology and Biostatistics
Michael Darden, PhD, Associate Professor of Health Policy and Management
Rupali Doshi, MD, Assistant Research Professor of Epidemiology and Biostatistics
Janet Heinrich, DrPH, RN, FAAN, Research Professor of Health Policy and Management
David Huebner, PhD, MPH, Associate Professor of Prevention and Community Health
Wolfgang Munar, MD, ScM, Research Professor of Global Health
Jennifer Muz, PhD, Assistant Professor of Global Health and Economics
Matias Attene Ramos, PhD, Associate Professor of Environmental and Occupational Health

NEW EMERITI

Jerome Danoff, PT, PhD, Professor Emeritus in Exercise and Nutrition Sciences
RESEARCH PLAYS A PIVOTAL ROLE in strengthening and expanding the foundation of Milken Institute SPH and in supporting its mission to advance the world’s health. Over the last year, the school’s total research spending reached approximately $86 million, which was 48 percent of GW’s total research expenditures for the year. The integration of the Biostatistics Center (BSC) and the Computational Biology Institute (CBI) helped to expand Milken Institute SPH’s research portfolio by conducting critical studies in epidemiology, clinical medicine and evolutionary biology. In the past year alone, BSC and CBI reported increases in research spending of 3 and 11 percent, respectively.
Could you be eating tilapia when you ordered Chilean sea bass? Possibly, according to GW scientists who used a powerful genetic technique to test seafood dinners sold in six DC restaurants and found 33 percent had been mislabeled.

Compared to other cities, however, DC fares better when it comes to seafood swapping.

“We didn’t see the kind of outright seafood fraud that has been reported in other cities,” said Keith Crandall, director of the Computational Biology Institute at Milken Institute SPH and leader of the study, which was published in *PeerJ* and was featured in news articles around the world. “Diners that ordered tuna got tuna—although maybe a slightly different type of tuna.”

To conduct the study, Crandall recruited GW graduate student David Stern to embark on a dream assignment: He and his wife were asked to visit six popular DC eateries and order whatever seafood dinners caught their fancy. Not only did the two get to dine out on tasty fare like crusted albacore tuna or pesto Chilean sea bass, but they also got to do it on Crandall’s tab. The only stipulation was that they had to bring a small sample of each of the 12 seafood items they ordered back to the lab.

The team then used DNA barcoding to compare the seafood sample with a database of DNA barcodes from known species to identify it. This technique found, for example, that the rock shrimp listed on the menu of one DC restaurant was actually whiteleg shrimp.

In most cases, though, fish were swapped with other species that were either closely related or considered acceptable alternatives for menu listing. Switching out seafood does a disservice to customers who are either trying to avoid species that are endangered or are paying a higher price for a species they think is a delicacy. The GW research team only found one sample that presented a conservation concern.

“For the most part, our study found that DC diners with a craving for seafood are getting what they paid for,” Crandall said.
THE ADVANTAGES OF BEING A WEEKEND WARRIOR

Squeezing in time for daily exercise is not always feasible for people with busy schedules—but compressing physical activity into a day or two over the weekend may be better than writing it off altogether, according to Epidemiology and Biostatistics Assistant Professor Hannah Arem and Exercise and Nutrition Sciences Professor and Chair Loretta DiPietro.

Arem and DiPietro suggested that so-called weekend warriors have a significantly lower mortality risk compared with inactive people in an invited commentary to a study published in a January 2017 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association Internal Medicine.

Specifically, researchers found that those who condensed exercise into one or two sessions per week—and met the recommended minimum guidelines for physical activity—had a 30 percent lower risk of death compared to those who do not exercise.

This is good news for people constrained by a busy weekday schedule, who cannot fit in the recommended minimum 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity exercise throughout the week, Arem and DiPietro wrote in their commentary.

At the same time, there are still many questions remaining about the optimal dose of physical activity in terms of total time, frequency and intensity.

They noted that those who exercise throughout the week or on a daily basis may be getting additional health benefits, such as countering the negative effects of an otherwise inactive lifestyle. For busy people, they recommend building short stints of physical activity into a daily routine by taking the stairs instead of the elevator or taking short, frequent walks.

SO-CALLED WEEKEND WARRIORS HAVE A SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER MORTALITY RISK COMPARED WITH INACTIVE PEOPLE.
The verdict is still out about the health impacts of low-calorie sweeteners, but one thing is for sure, its consumption is on the rise—particularly among children. About a quarter of children in the United States reported consuming foods and beverages that contain low-calorie sweeteners (LCS), according to a Milken Institute SPH-led study. That’s a 200 percent jump between 1999 and 2012. This increase wasn’t unique to children: The study, which is the first to look at the use of these sweeteners in foods, beverages and packets using the most recent data for the U.S. population, also found that LCS consumption increased by 54 percent among U.S. adults during the same time frame.

LCS products, such as aspartame, sucralose, and saccharin, are often used in place of added sugars such as sucrose and high-fructose corn syrup.

“The findings are important, especially for children, because some studies suggest a link between low-calorie sweeteners and obesity, diabetes and other health issues,” said Assistant Professor of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences and lead author of the study Allison Sylvetsky Meni.

To determine LCS consumption, researchers used the survey results from two dietary interviews in which consumers recalled what they ate or drank during a previous 24-hour period. They conducted a cross-sectional study using data from nearly 17,000 men, women and children included in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey from 2009 to 2012 and compared the findings to a prior analysis using data from 1999 to 2008.

Published in the Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, the study also found the following:

- Of those reporting LCS consumption, 44 percent of adults and 20 percent of children consumed low-calorie sweeteners more than once a day.
- Seventeen percent of adults had a food or beverage sweetened with these products three times a day or more.
- The likelihood of consuming low-calorie sweeteners went up as adult body mass index, a measure of obesity, went up.
- Nineteen percent of adults with obesity, compared to 13 percent of normal weight adults, used LCS products three times a day or more.
- About 70 percent of LCS consumption occurred at home.
- Children as young as 2 are eating or drinking LCS-sweetened foods and beverages.
The dust bunnies gathered in the corner and under your couch are not just unsightly—they’re also full of harmful chemicals, according to a first-of-a-kind study led by Milken Institute SPH researchers.

The study revealed that household dust exposes people to a wide range of toxic chemicals from everyday products such as DEHP, which belongs to a hazardous class called phthalates.

The chemicals are released into the air and get into dust that then settles on household items or the floor. People can inhale or ingest small dust particles or even absorb them through the skin. Infants and young children are particularly at risk because they crawl and play on dusty floors and put their hands in their mouths, the study authors said.

“We’re also particularly concerned about young children because they may be extremely vulnerable to the adverse health effects of these chemicals because their bodies and brains are still developing,” said Environmental and Occupational Health Assistant Professor Ami Zota, lead author of the study.

To conduct the study, the multi-institutional team of researchers pooled data from 26 peer-reviewed papers and one unpublished dataset that analyzed dust samples taken from homes in 14 states. They found 45 potentially toxic chemicals that are used in many consumer and household products such as vinyl flooring, personal care and cleaning products, building materials and home furnishings.

The study, which was published in the journal *Environmental Science & Technology*, was featured in news coverage around the world, including an NBC Today Show segment.
For Professor of Prevention and Community Health Melissa Napolitano, a particularly gratifying part of her work involves teaching and mentoring students, many of whom will become future leaders in the field of public health.

In addition to teaching three classes this past year, Napolitano worked with 32 graduate and undergraduate students who helped her gather data for her Healthy Body Healthy U (HBHU) study—a two-site project funded by NIH that uses Facebook and text messaging to help college students lose weight.

Seven of the graduate students working with Napolitano have also developed their own independent project from HBHU data for their Culminating Experience, which is a capstone project for the MPH degree.

“Part of what I enjoy about this project is involving students and helping them learn firsthand about the research process,” says Napolitano, who is herself a research powerhouse with 60 peer-reviewed publications and 120 national and international presentations. She is also currently the principal investigator or co-investigator on three NIH-funded studies, including HBHU.

Napolitano, who arrived at Milken Institute SPH’s Department of Prevention and Community Health in September 2012, also lends her expertise to several boards and publications.

This past April, she was honored with an appointment as a board member and vice-treasurer of the International Society for Physical Activity and Health, the leading global society of researchers and practitioners focused on promoting physical activity across the lifespan. Napolitano also just completed a two-year term as the elected co-chair of the Physical Activity Special Interest Group for the Society of Behavioral Medicine.

This year she was asked to serve as a consultant to the 2018 Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee (PAGAC), a group that reviews the scientific findings on physical activity and health. PAGAC then helps prepare a report to the HHS Secretary that provides recommendations for the next edition of the U.S. Physical Activity Guidelines. Napolitano was also appointed and now serves as the senior associate editor for the Journal of Physical Activity and Health, an internationally recognized scientific journal.

“Serving in these capacities allows me to network and collaborate with scientists in the United States and globally,” Napolitano says. “It also enables me to learn about cutting-edge research as well as global initiatives, which enhances my ability to help my students understand the implications of the skills and information they are learning in class.”
A new collaborative agreement with the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) will allow GW’s Health Workforce Research Center (HWRC) to continue its research exploring workforce challenges and opportunities that are evolving amidst a rapidly changing health care system and an aging population.

The HRSA agreement will allow HWRC to conduct more than 20 studies in the next five years, specifically focusing on two broad areas:

• the availability of the health care workforce in rural and underserved communities, including the influence of education and training models on distribution, and

• the organization of the workforce, including evaluation of new workforce models, and the use of technologies to increase efficiency, access, equity, and overall health outcomes.

HRSA will select four of the studies each year and findings will be reported in the form of policy briefs, abstracts, and reports and/or peer-reviewed articles, all aimed at helping to inform education and training programs, as well as other special programs covered by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Led by Health Policy and Management Professor Patricia Pittman, the HWRC is part of GW’s Health Workforce Institute—a one-of-a-kind institute based at Milken Institute SPH that hopes to bolster health workforce policies in the United States and around the world. The collaborative effort involves the work of faculty members and staff at Milken Institute SPH and five other GW schools including the School of Medicine and Health Sciences; the School of Nursing; the School of Business; the Graduate School of Education and Human Development; and the Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration.
GW TO HELP LEAD EFFORT TO FIND A CURE FOR HIV/AIDS

While large strides have been made in the prevention and treatment of HIV, researchers now have hope that they can find a cure for the virus that still affects an estimated 1.1 million people in the U.S.

Through a $27 million, five-year Martin Delaney Collaboratory grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to Douglas Nixon in GW’s School of Medicine and Health Sciences, researchers from Milken Institute SPH will collaborate in a novel approach to an HIV cure strategy. This innovative cell therapy approach will focus on making individuals’ immune systems work better in eliminating HIV reservoirs—groups of infected cells that are in a resting state and not actively producing new HIV—which “kick and kill” HIV cure strategies have thus far been unable to do.

In collaboration with 17 different sites, GW researchers will define mechanisms that have prevented the immune system from completely clearing infected cells.

The project, named Bench to Bed Enhanced Lymphocyte Infusions to Engineer Viral Eradication (BELIEVE), will include studies ranging from basic science research through translation into clinical studies, and also includes the following initial research goals:

• enhancing the killing ability of HIV-specific killer T-cells;

• augmenting natural killer cell functions; and

• harnessing T-cell, natural killer cell, and antibody-mediated effectors in both adult and pediatric HIV infections.

“This is a tremendous opportunity for GWSPH investigators to support the work of Dr. Nixon and his many colleagues through the provision of administrative, biostatistical and community engagement support,” said Alan E. Greenberg, chair of the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics and director of the DC Center for AIDS Research (DC CFAR). “In addition, the DC CFAR will continue to play an important role facilitating collaboration with HIV clinical, laboratory and behavioral scientists throughout Washington, DC.”
CENTERS & INSTITUTES

Antibiotic Resistance Action Center (ARAC)
Avance Center
Biostatistics Center
Biostatistics and Epidemiology Consulting Service (BECS)
Center for Health and Health Care in Schools
Center for Healthcare Quality
Center for Health Policy Research
Center for Risk Science and Public Health
Center for Social Well-Being and Development (CSWD)
Computational Biology Institute
DC Center for AIDS Research (DC CFAR)
DC Metro Tobacco Research and Instruction Consortium (MeTRIC)
Geiger Gibson Program in Community Health Policy
GW Center for Global Health
GW Health Workforce Institute
GW Health Workforce Research Center (HWRC)
Hirsh Health Law and Policy Program
Integrated Behavioral Health Policy Program
Jacobs Institute of Women’s Health
mWellness Development and Optimization Program
National Center for Medical-Legal Partnership
Strategies to Overcome and Prevent (STOP) Obesity Alliance
Sumner M. Redstone Global Center for Prevention and Wellness
With the addition of new staff and resources this year, the Sumner M. Redstone Global Center for Prevention and Wellness has expanded its commitment to promoting health and improving lives by reducing health inequities in the District of Columbia and beyond.

In June, the Redstone Center announced that it received an $800,000 grant from the Kresge Foundation for its Building Community Resilience (BCR) initiative. BCR addresses the root causes of adversity to improve children’s health and life outcomes by aligning resources and systems to strengthen community resilience, including pediatric health care and local governments.

To help advance its work and to strengthen its relationships with local, national and global partners, the Redstone Center announced the appointment of Jeff Hild, JD, as its first policy director in March. As a former congressional staffer, Hild brings years of experience working with members of Congress to advance legislation focused on poverty, child welfare, health, the environment and Social Security. Prior to joining Milken Institute SPH, Hild served as chief of staff for the Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, where he helped finalize regulations for Head Start, child care, child support and other key human services programs.

The Kresge Foundation grant was awarded to advance a new collaboration between BCR and the National Association of County and City Health Officials, which will initiate and develop partnerships with local health departments to support child, family and community health.

“Large-scale prevention and mitigation of chronic disease will only be possible through alignment of our major systems with the needs and desires of the communities they impact and are meant to serve,” said Redstone Center Chair William Dietz. “BCR facilitates that work, and what we have already learned from the collaborative has been remarkable.”
LEADING THE BATTLE AGAINST OBESITY

More than one-third of U.S. adults currently live with obesity, yet there are no standards for educating health care providers about the disease. Until now.

Redstone Center Chair William Dietz co-chaired the development of the first-ever health care guidelines to educate health care providers on how to better treat and prevent obesity. The competencies were developed through consensus by representatives from more than 20 health care provider organizations.

“...the competencies encompass nearly every aspect of obesity care and will be essential to improving the ability of all types of providers to deliver effective care for people with obesity,” said Dietz. “The next essential step will be for these health care organizations to incorporate the competencies into their curricula, professional licensing and certification.”

Dietz also identified a new target for intervention that will be key to the reversal of the obesity epidemic: young adults. No other age is associated with as many life transitions that could affect the development of obesity and excessive weight gain, Dietz wrote in an editorial published in the Journal of the American Medical Association. And because young adults ages 20 to 39 years are often parents or soon-to-be parents, prevention of obesity in this demographic may also reduce the prevalence of obesity in their children.

URGENT CARE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA AND ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE ACTION CENTER PARTNER TO ADVANCE ANTIBIOTIC STEWARDSHIP

The Urgent Care Association of America (UCAOA) and the Antibiotic Resistance Action Center (ARAC) at Milken Institute SPH entered a three-year partnership to make the urgent care industry a leader in antibiotic stewardship by reducing inappropriate antibiotic use in this outpatient setting—action that could help slow the growing threat of antibiotic resistance.

Bacteria that are resistant to our best antibiotics continue to emerge. Reducing inappropriate antibiotic use in all settings, including human medicine and animal medicine, is crucial to preserving the utility of these life-saving drugs, according to ARAC.

Through the partnership, UCAOA and ARAC will combine their respective expertise to improve patient and clinician understanding of appropriate antibiotic use. Together they will develop patient education programs, implement training and education programs for both clinical and non-clinical staff, identify the most effective clinical decision support tools, collect in-depth data on antibiotic prescribing, implement evidence-based antibiotic stewardship practices and conduct research.

“We know that often patients demand antibiotics from their care providers even if a prescription is not warranted,” said Cindy Liu, chief medical officer for ARAC. “Since urgent care sees a higher proportion of patients with acute symptoms than traditional primary care, their providers frequently deal with these issues, and we are excited that UCAOA has reached out to be part of the solution.”
Jacob's Institute of Women's Health Names New Journal Editor

Prevention and Community Health Associate Professor Amita N. Vyas, whose work focuses on the health and well-being of women and adolescents, was appointed as the new editor-in-chief of Women's Health Issues in July. The peer-reviewed journal of the Jacobs Institute of Women's Health at Milken Institute SPH is dedicated to improving the health and health care of women over the course of their lives.

Vyas’ “focus on addressing the social determinants of health for women and girls is critical to address health disparities and to promote health equity,” said Susan F. Wood, professor of health policy and management and director of the Jacobs Institute. “She will continue to expand the journal’s reach in publishing rigorous, high-impact research on women’s health.”

We may have more reasons to care about the types of meat we purchase and eat. A GW study found that a superbug is spreading from pigs to people in Denmark and causing serious blood infections.

For years, it has been thought that livestock-associated methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (LA-MRSA)—drug-resistant staph—is benign, causing mostly manageable skin infections in farm workers and veterinarians, said Lance B. Price, one of the senior authors on the paper and director of the Antibiotic Resistance Action Center at Milken Institute SPH. Yet, this study shows that LA-MRSA is just as dangerous as other types of MRSA, and it’s not confined to farms.

“It’s infecting vulnerable populations like the elderly and people with compromised immune systems—we can’t afford to ignore superbugs like these as they spread through our livestock and food supplies,” Price said.

Published in the journal Clinical Infectious Diseases, the study is the first to quantify the extent to which LA-MRSA causes blood infections in Denmark. Researchers studied bloodstream infections caused by all strains of MRSA in Denmark from 2010 to 2014 and found that blood infections from LA-MRSA were on the rise, peaking in 2014 and accounting for 16 percent of all MRSA bloodstream infections.

Livestock-associated staph can spread from farm animals to people through direct contact with the animals, through contaminated meat that’s produced from the animals and possibly through air and water near industrial hog operations.

The superbug can also be found in the United States on farms and in the food supply. “We know that U.S. livestock can also carry antibiotic-resistant staph and that U.S. livestock workers are at increased risk for picking up these bacteria, but our government agencies don’t do the kind of detailed surveillance that they do in Denmark, so we have no idea how often people are getting sick from livestock-associated staph,” Price said.
In a series of reports, Professor Leighton Ku and his colleagues at Milken Institute SPH and The Commonwealth Fund have predicted the economic impact of repealing key provisions of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), including an analysis of bills introduced by lawmakers on Capitol Hill.

The series started with an initial study published January 5 after President-elect Trump and GOP lawmakers vowed they would repeal the ACA. Ku and his team issued a report that looked at repeal of certain parts of the ACA and found that such legislation could trigger massive job loss and a slump in consumer and business spending.

In a second report, Ku’s team analyzed actual legislation passed by the House of Representatives in May—the American Health Care Act (AHCA). If enacted, that legislation could cause nearly 1 million jobs to disappear and lead to an economic downturn in every state in the U.S. and the District of Columbia, according to the analysis. This report predicted that, under the AHCA, states that expanded their Medicaid coverage would experience more severe economic losses.

In the third report, Ku’s team analyzed the draft Better Care Reconciliation Act (BCRA), which was proposed by the Senate as an alternative to the AHCA. The analysis concludes that if BCRA became law, it would lead to job loss of nearly 1.5 million by the year 2026.

In every scenario studied, the researchers predicted that the health care sector would lose the most jobs; but as provisions of the legislation kicked in, jobs would disappear in other parts of the economy from construction to real estate.

In addition to the job losses, the three reports also estimate that state economies would take a hit.

At press time, Congress has yet to pass a final bill to reform the U.S. health care system.

**HEALTH CARE BILLS COULD TRIGGER ECONOMIC DOWNTURN, JOB LOSS**

In California, 32,000 jobs would be lost; in Tennessee, 28,000 jobs; in North Carolina, 41,000; in Michigan, 51,000; in Ohio, 42,000; in Maine, 9,992; in Pennsylvania, 88,000; in New York, 86,000; in West Virginia, 10,240; in New Jersey, 42,000; in Florida, 83,000; and in Illinois, 46,000. All figures are based on the AHCA’s economic consequences for states, published by The Commonwealth Fund in June 2017.

Repeal of key provisions of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), combined with a failure to renew critical funding streams, would result in catastrophic funding losses for community health centers—forcing these safety net providers to cut back on services, lay off staff or shut down clinical sites, according to a report by investigators at the Geiger Gibson/RCHN Community Health Research Collaborative at Milken Institute SPH. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has projected that the American Health Care Act (AHCA), as introduced by the House of Representatives on March 6, would eliminate health insurance coverage for 24 million people by 2026. AHCA puts ACA expansions of private insurance subsidies at risk and includes cuts to Medicaid, which is a key source of insurance coverage for community health center patients.

To find out how reversal of the coverage gains and increased funding made possible by the ACA might affect community health center revenue, staffing, and patients, the researchers surveyed community health centers. The survey, which captured information from a representative group of nearly 600 centers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and three U.S. territories, shows the following:

- **Patient care impacts.** Reduced hours, site closures, and service reductions driven by revenue cuts will translate into fewer people served.

- **Catastrophic financial effects.** More than 80 percent of community health centers estimate financial losses exceeding 20 percent.

- **Staff layoffs.** Community health centers would be forced to lay off mission-critical staff, including doctors, nurses and others who provide care to high-risk, vulnerable people in underserved rural and urban communities.

- **Service reductions.** Virtually all community health centers said that they would have to pare down or cut services in response to funding losses of this magnitude.

The report was funded by the RCHN Community Health Foundation.

**THOMAS LAVEIST,**
CHAIR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

**HEALTH CENTERS FACE CATASTROPHIC LOSSES UNDER REPEAL OF AFFORDABLE CARE ACT**

**MORE THAN 80 PERCENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS ESTIMATE FINANCIAL LOSSES EXCEEDING 20 PERCENT.**
REPORT OFFERS BLUEPRINT FOR BUILDING HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES

Affordable and safe housing, welcoming neighborhoods, access to nutritious food, strong child development programs, and quality education are all key factors that make up a healthy community. A recent report by Milken Institute SPH researchers outlines a novel tax strategy that would encourage tax-exempt hospitals to take on a bigger role in addressing such factors with the end goal of building healthier communities.

For this report, the researchers analyzed the most up-to-date hospital community health needs assessment (CHNA), which nonprofit hospitals must conduct every three years. The researchers found that 72 percent of the nonprofit hospitals in the study identified obesity, 68 percent identified mental health and 62 percent identified diabetes as the top health challenges in their communities.

The report, which was funded by The Kresge Foundation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, suggests that hospitals could be encouraged to take steps to actively address these top health problems and others in their communities. The authors outline three policy opportunities that would help align U.S. tax policy with the growing focus on community-wide health improvement.

First, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) could issue guidance to hospitals stating that activities now designated as community building efforts, but that promote population health, will be treated as community benefit spending.

Second, the IRS could bring greater transparency to community benefit reporting by creating a link between community health priorities as identified in the CHNAs and their community-benefit spending allocations.

Third, working with experts drawn across the federal government, the IRS could issue tax guidance on effective community-wide health improvement activities.

At a time when the future of affordable insurance is uncertain, hospitals will continue to invest the great majority of their community benefit obligations in financial assistance for those in need. But with relatively minor adjustments, the IRS can considerably strengthen hospitals’ potential role as community health improvement actors, said Sara Rosenbaum, the Harold and Jane Hirsh Professor of Health Law and Policy at Milken Institute SPH and the lead author of the report. In addition to Rosenbaum, Maureen Byrnes and others in the Milken Institute SPH Department of Health Policy and Management authored the report.
In 2016, the National Academy of Medicine (NAM) called on Dean Goldman and more than 100 leading researchers, scientists and policymakers from across the United States to provide expert guidance on 19 priority issues for U.S. health policy. Dean Goldman and other Milken Institute SPH faculty members participated in Vital Directions for Health and Health Care, a NAM initiative that commissioned and published a series of papers with the goal of contributing to the current U.S. debate on health reform.

Dean Goldman, who is a NAM member, along with Sumner M. Redstone Global Center for Prevention and Wellness Director William Dietz, served as lead author for one of the published papers, titled “Advancing the Health of Communities and Populations.” In the paper, Goldman and her colleagues say the nation has a long way to go to improve public health. “Achieving the highest possible level of health in communities and populations requires a rebalancing of our overall investment in ways that enhance disease prevention and wellness strategies,” the authors say. They go on to urge the White House and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to lead the way in the push for healthier communities.

Dean Goldman also served as first author of a viewpoint published online in the Journal of the American Medical Association, titled “Putting the Health of Communities and Populations First.” In that piece, Goldman and her co-authors say that the poor U.S. performance on key population health measures is a “call to action that justifies bold strategies.”

The series also includes the paper “Chronic Disease Prevention: Tobacco, Physical Activity, and Nutrition for a Healthy Start.” Dietz served as lead author and Kathleen Merrigan, executive director for sustainability at GW, served as a co-author. Dietz, Merrigan and their colleagues say rates of preventable diseases linked to tobacco, inactivity, obesity and consumption of added sugar, salt and saturated fats have far outpaced our capacity to manage and treat patients.

Jeffrey Levi, professor of health policy and management at Milken Institute SPH, also participated in the project and co-authored the paper “Information Technology Interoperability and Use for Better Care and Evidence.”
With the recent uncertainty around the nation’s health policies, faculty and researchers in the Department of Health Policy and Management have been working all year long to help policymakers make informed choices and aid those who would be affected by potential changes in legislation.

In addition to the many detailed analyses, reports and commentaries published by faculty and researchers, the department also launched the Health Policy Expert Series of lectures and panel discussions that explored the implications of health care reform.

Featured speakers included Harold and Jane Hirsh Professor of Health Law and Policy Sara Rosenbaum, Health Policy Professor and Director of the Center for Health Policy Research Leighton Ku, the former Deputy Advisor for Healthcare and Social Affairs to the Presidency of the French Republic Olivier Bogillot, and many other health policy faculty and experts.

Speakers explored topics such as the effects of reforming the Affordable Care Act, the health care delivery system and how it plays into creating healthy communities and populations, the future of Medicaid and much more. The series of discussions is one of the many ways Milken Institute SPH is influencing the conversation around health policy and training the next generations of health policymakers to continue the critical work needed to make our world a healthier place.
2017 has been a rollercoaster year for health care reform. Repealing and replacing the Affordable Care Act was at the top of the Trump administration’s early agenda, and hardly a day went by when the topic wasn’t dominating the headlines.

To help provide timely analysis and insight, the Milken Institute SPH Department of Health Policy and Management hosted a symposium in April, titled “The Affordable Care Act: What Comes Next?”

Part of the Health Policy Expert series, the full-day symposium explored possible health care market reforms and what might happen in the context of repeal and replace efforts.

The event was moderated by health policy and management faculty and researchers, including Harold and Jane Hirsh Professor of Health Law and Policy Sara Rosenbaum, Professor and Director of the Center for Health Policy Research Leighton Ku and Lead Research Scientist Maureen Byrnes.

Panelists, including Milken Institute SPH health policy experts and noted Washington insiders, discussed the impact that legislative changes would have on key sectors from consumers to public health and health systems to the broader economy.

With events like this one, as well as the dozens of former students who are currently working on Capitol Hill, Milken Institute SPH faculty and students have had a chance to influence one of the greatest debates in our country’s history—the right to affordable health care, Dean Goldman said during an introduction to the event.

“Despite the instability that this current state of affairs brings, and perhaps because of it, I believe there’s never been a more interesting time to be in public health,” she said.
STUDENTS DRIVE NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK EVENTS

Milken Institute SPH celebrated National Public Health Week (NPHW) this year with a full lineup of events, many of which were organized by winners of a mini-grant competition run by the school’s Public Health Student Association (PHSA).

The group asked students to submit ideas for events that would help promote NPHW on campus and selected nearly 10 winning ideas. Each of the winners received funding from PHSA and organized panel discussions, film screenings, lectures and more on topics around mental health, what it takes to run for public office, and girls’ education. One group even planned a pop-up event that showcased women’s health issues and experiences of menstruation and body image through photography.

PHSA also helped organize the week’s opening keynote address by immediate past president of the American Public Health Association Camara Jones, who spoke about health equality and the national campaign against racism—a campaign she started while at APHA.

Other events that took place throughout the week included a film screening of the award-winning documentary Dying in Vein: The Opiate Generation, a panel discussion and film screening on the topic of workers’ rights, meditation in nearby Washington Circle and free STD testing.

PLANNED PARENTHOOD PRESIDENT DELIVERS CLOSING KEYNOTE

Cecile Richards, president of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America and the Planned Parenthood Action Fund, capped off NPHW by calling on the public health community to rise above politics to ensure equitable access to health care.

“There’s never been a better time to be committed to public health,” Richards told a packed room at Milken Institute SPH on April 7 during the week’s closing keynote address and Edward N. Brandt Jr. Memorial Lecture.

The women’s health and reproductive rights activist spoke about the formation of Planned Parenthood—celebrating its 100th birthday this year—it’s impact, and the challenges the organization is facing.

With a growing number of states diverting federal Medicaid dollars from Planned Parenthood health centers, the nonprofit specializing in reproductive health care is facing an uncertain future, and so are the 2.4 million women, men and children who visit these centers every year.

Planned Parenthood is in every state and supports programs in 12 countries worldwide, Richards told the audience. One in five women in the U.S. has been to one of its health centers, which serve all populations, regardless of gender, race, identity or sexual orientation.

“We don’t care where you come from—you deserve access to health care,” Richards said.

Her message clearly resonated with students. “As public health advocates, it is our responsibility to be informed on policies and programs that impact health and act towards alleviating inequity and promoting health across the population,” said the event’s co-organizers and the 2016-2017 co-presidents of the Public Health Student Association Zannah Herridge-Meyer, MPH ’17, and Rachel Gunsalus, MPH candidate.
While the environmental and physical effects of climate change are often the most talked about, this global issue can also have psychological, spiritual and social effects, according to a group of experts who joined Milken Institute SPH for an important panel discussion on the many and far-reaching effects of climate change.

Its effects are not blind to income level, gender or geography either, said Surili Patel, senior program manager, environmental health at the American Public Health Association (APHA), who moderated the #ClimateChangesHealth discussion on April 5. “Climate change affects us all.”

It’s not uncommon, for example, for people to feel frustrated by news of what is happening to our environment, said Lise Van Susteren, a DC-based psychiatrist with a special interest in the mental health effects of climate change. Her advice: “Take the emotional energy and direct it toward an action you can take,” she said. “That moves [the feeling] from a place of vulnerability to empowerment.”

Beyond the emotional effects, rising carbon dioxide levels have been shown to affect cognitive function and, for some, there are faith-based implications of climate change. Consider American Indians, who are closely in tune with nature for both sustenance and spiritual well-being, said another panelist.

For those who want to take action today, Milken Institute SPH Environmental and Occupational Health and Global Health Assistant Professor Amanda Northcross advised thinking more closely about personal connections to climate change, such as the amount of clothing we buy, the foods we eat and the transportation we use.

Co-hosted by Milken Institute SPH and APHA, the event embodied APHA’s mission to address the health effects of climate change throughout 2017. We all have a role to play in tackling the issue, Patel said.
The Director of DC’s Department of Health is hoping to bolster public health’s brand.

“We want people to recognize that public health is a science, that there is a science to what we do,” LaQuandra Nesbitt told an audience at Milken Institute SPH on April 5. Dr. Nesbitt delivered the keynote address during GW’s Research Days, the annual two-day celebration of student research at the university. Changing people’s view of public health is a significant part of Dr. Nesbitt’s vision for transforming health and well-being in the District of Columbia, which she hopes will one day become the healthiest city in America.

In her address, Dr. Nesbitt touched on the social, economic, political, geographic and environmental determinants of health as well as how to tackle disparities—topics that were top-of-mind for the room full of participants and winners of Research Days.

Students submitted posters on a broad array of public health topics, including the promotion of new diabetes products in DC, e-cigarettes and smoking cessation among pregnant women, organic pollutants and mortality in the United States and more. This year saw the highest number of research submissions from Milken Institute SPH students. Student winners included Kanchan Misra, BSPH, Kristiann Fry, MPH ’16, Kan Gianattasio, PhD candidate, Monica Zdanukiewicz, MPH candidate, Atlang Mompe, MPH candidate, and Shawn Chiang, MPH ’17.
NATURE’S REMEDY

Nature can have powerful effects on us, according to journalist, award-winning author and Environmental and Occupational Health Lecturer Florence Williams, who joined an enthusiastic crowd at Milken Institute SPH to present material from her recent book, *The Nature Fix: Why Nature Makes Us Happier, Healthier, and More Creative*, earlier this year.

In her book, Williams traces the idea that exposure to nature can make us happier all the way back to Aristotle’s time and explores the science behind the theory that having access to green space and the great outdoors can help improve mood, physical health and creativity.

‘FIND YOUR VOICE’

As the youngest person and fourth woman to serve as chairman of the National Board of Directors for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Roslyn M. Brock, MHSA ’89, has spent much of her career breaking boundaries.

The health care executive, social justice advocate and minister is also dedicated to encouraging the next generation to reach higher and farther. “I challenge you to find your voice,” Brock told graduates during a moving address at the Milken Institute SPH 2017 Commencement Ceremony.

Speaking to a packed crowd, Brock rallied the nearly 750 graduates to persist in their quests to make the world a better place: “I firmly believe that each of you will go out into communities and plant the seeds that will change the face of health care reform.”

A Milken Institute SPH alumna herself, having earned a master’s in health care administration from the school in 1989, Brock is vice president of advocacy and government relations for Bon Secours Health System, Inc., a national nonprofit health system that includes acute-care hospitals, assisted living facilities, nursing care facilities, and other health services. In addition to her role as chairman emeritus of the National Board of Directors of the NAACP, Brock is also immediate past chair of the Milken Institute SPH Board of Advisors.
Throughout the year, Milken Institute SPH students and graduates have been working on the Girl Rising campaign’s Gender Curriculum, which aims to inspire, motivate and lead change for gender equality in Indian schools and in students’ own lives. It is the central component of the Girl Rising Schools Campaign: a comprehensive 24-week, in-school curriculum that will reach 40,000 students—boys and girls—in 252 middle schools across the states of Rajasthan, Haryana, Punjab, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu.

This past summer, the Milken Institute SPH team collected baseline data as part of the evaluation of the Gender Curriculum in Punjab and Rajasthan. They developed an innovative methodology to allow students to take baseline surveys on mobile tablets—both reading and listening to each question/response in Hindi—and have administered more than 2,000 surveys to middle school students. The curriculum officially launched in mid-August and will be completed in March 2018, when the Milken Institute SPH team will return to the field to administer follow-up surveys, focus groups and teacher interviews.
Gayatri Malhotra knows firsthand the struggles of being a girl growing up in a country with a wide gender gap, especially when it comes to education. The second-year global health student says it was her early experiences in the classroom in India that fueled her desire to work with Girl Rising this past summer.

Malhotra, who received the Knapp Fellowship for Entrepreneurial Service-Learning, spent the summer in Delhi implementing a pilot research and evaluation project that expands upon the mission of Girl Rising through a partnership with Teach for India. Malhotra’s project aims to adapt and implement a program to promote gender equality in the city’s urban slum communities using Girl Rising’s creative multimedia tools to address gender stereotypes and disparities in the classroom.

Stemming from the 2013 documentary by the same name, the Girl Rising initiative leverages media tools to give female adolescents a voice and increased independence and to inspire community members to join the movement for gender equality, says Associate Professor and Director of Milken Institute SPH’s Maternal and Child Health program, Amita Vyas, who is also the principal investigator of the Girl Rising India project at Milken Institute SPH.

Malhotra’s summer work consisted of conducting pre-assessment surveys with more than 350 boys and girls to understand their perceptions, beliefs and attitudes on gender stereotypes.

“With each teacher that I collaborate with and each student that I meet, a deep-seeded determination has been planted within me to break down the barriers that prevent boys and girls from achieving their full potential.”
A Milken Institute SPH team is hoping to turn medicine right side up with an entrepreneurial venture that took home the top prize in GW’s ninth annual New Venture Competition in April. The startup—Urgent Wellness—plans to develop telemedicine and medical vending machines staffed by community health workers in order to lower health care costs nationwide and improve access for homeless and low-income patients. Urgent Wellness centers will be placed in low-income housing projects, homeless shelters and community-based service organizations in Washington, DC, and will eventually be placed in other markets.

Team members included Aubrey Van Kirk Villalobos, DrPH candidate and director of cancer control and health equity at the GW Cancer Center’s Institute for Patient-Centered Initiatives and Health Equity; Freya Spielberg, associate professor in prevention and community health and director of community-oriented primary care at Milken Institute SPH; John Barabino, an entrepreneur and former Google executive; and Milken Institute SPH alumnus Luigi Leblanc.

“Urgent Wellness stems from the idea that you can improve health outcomes and health disparities while reducing health care costs,” said Villalobos. “Our centers will be staffed by skilled Community Health Workers and provide disease prevention education, chronic disease management counseling and tools, and acute care telemedicine. This will help save money from unnecessary emergency room visits and avoid hospitalizations by helping people better control their health.”

Villalobos and her teammates won $15,000, as well as an additional $5,000 AARP Foundation Older-Adult Focused Innovation Prize, for their startup. Participants of GW’s New Venture Competition, which is one of the largest collegiate entrepreneurship competitions in the country, competed for $300,000 in cash and in-kind prizes.

When Hurricane Matthew hit the small Caribbean country of Haiti in October 2016, Milken Institute SPH student Kathleen Corrigan was one of the first responders on the ground.

Before coming to Milken Institute SPH to pursue her Master of Public Health in global health program design, monitoring and evaluation, Corrigan was working in a small emergency/critical care facility in Port-au-Prince.

When she heard the hurricane was going to strike Haiti, she reconnected with her former colleagues and was soon traveling with a team of eight as an Innovating Health International (IHI) staff member with IHI partner Haiti Air Ambulance.

Corrigan, along with an IHI team member, flew to Dame Marie on the far southwestern coast of Haiti where they spent five days addressing needs like wound care, tetanus vaccines and administering antibiotics to prevent infections. The hurricane damage had not only destroyed houses and medical facilities, but also wiped out sanitary water sources for many communities. Cholera and dehydration became big concerns.

After traveling to Anse d’Hainault, where there was a massive cholera outbreak, Corrigan began reporting what she found to a water, sanitation and hygiene representative of the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance. Her assessment led to the arrival of a support team and supplies to fix the town’s water system and create a reliable source of potable water.

With more than a decade’s experience in critical care and trauma nursing, Corrigan says her previous medical training was helpful, but credits the skills she learned in her MPH program for helping her make an impact early on.

“Understanding how to do needs assessments and disseminate accurate knowledge was probably the most important thing to do in those initial days,” she said.
BREATHING EASIER: WHAT WILL IT TAKE?

Environmental and Occupational Health (EOH) MPH ‘17 alumnus Ans Irfan is the kind of person who makes things happen. So when it came time to complete his practicum, Irfan decided to focus on conducting applied research with the potential to catalyze policy change.

“I am trained as a medical doctor,” Irfan said, “and I wanted to do something public health practice-oriented that could make a bigger difference at the population level.”

Irfan connected with Associate Professor Susan Anenberg, co-founder of Environmental Health Analytics. She assigned Irfan to work on a practicum project with the World Bank, which was working to influence public health in Mozambique, where 95 percent of households burn solid fuels, mainly wood and charcoal, for cooking.

“Cooking with solid fuels like wood, charcoal and coal is inefficient and creates a lot of smoke,” says EOH Assistant Professor Amanda Northcross, who Irfan credits with furthering his interest in air pollution. “Inhaling that smoke on a daily basis creates significant health impacts,” such as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases. The World Health Organization estimates that more than 4 million people a year die prematurely from exposure to smoke that comes from cooking with solid fuels.

As part of his practicum project, Irfan worked in collaboration with Anenberg, colleagues at the World Bank and other researchers to estimate the potential air quality, health and climate benefits of expanding the use of cleaner woodstoves in Mozambique’s rural areas and modern charcoal and liquefied petroleum gas stoves in the country’s urban areas.

The researchers found that cleaner cooking stoves could help achieve both health and climate benefits. Their research was published February 2017 in the journal Environmental Research Letters.

Irfan says he hopes to continue making contributions in the public health field, building on existing progress and actively applying research in the field.
In June 2017, GW reached its billion-dollar campaign goal, making it one of only a handful of universities in the U.S. to do so, and it is thanks to the generosity of more than 66,000 donors, alumni and friends who have helped to shape the University’s student and faculty experiences. Since the 2014 launch of Making History: The Campaign for GW, the trajectory of Milken Institute SPH has changed dramatically. Over the past three years, transformative gifts have exponentially accelerated the school’s efforts to develop translational research, convene leaders and thinkers to tackle the world’s biggest public health challenges, and educate students to be the public health innovators of tomorrow. We’ve seen the impact of this extraordinary support as the school continues to climb in national rankings and attract the brightest students and top-notch faculty. Thanks a billion!
FACULTY & STAFF PHILANTHROPY CAMPAIGN SUCCESSES

During the month of February 2017, Milken Institute SPH’s Development team launched the second iteration of its student-centered philanthropy campaign, #IHeartGWSPH. This year’s campaign leveraged a $5000 challenge gift from alumnus Todd Krim, BA ’91, JD ’95, MPH ’95, to increase student participation and partnered with Milken Institute SPH faculty and staff to raise awareness about the importance of philanthropy as a driving force behind the school’s efforts to strengthen its capacity to provide the best public health education in the country.

The #IHeartGWSPH faculty and staff campaign raised over $36,000 for student scholarships from a record 119 faculty and staff donors, including 58 percent of full-time faculty.

“I’M INSPIRED BY GWSPH STUDENTS’ COMMITMENT TO EACH OTHER AND THEIR COMMUNITY.”

—TODD KRIM, BA ’91, JD ’95, MPH ’95, PRESIDENT AND CEO, THE KRIM GROUP

“AS A NEW GW EMPLOYEE, I AM IN AWE OF THIS GREAT UNIVERSITY IN OUR NATION’S CAPITAL, SO I GIVE BECAUSE I WANT TO PLAY A ROLE IN THE ADVANCEMENT OF HEALTH EQUITY.”

—ASHANTI CARTER, EXECUTIVE SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE CHAIR, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH POLICY AND MANAGEMENT
A first-generation Bangladeshi-American who came to the U.S. when she was 2 years old, Farzana Karim, MPH '17, had a long-held dream of one day working in her home country. While pursuing her MPH in the maternal and child health program at Milken Institute SPH, she landed the opportunity of a lifetime: a chance to intern at the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research (icddr,b) in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Despite her excitement, the reality of traveling to Bangladesh and living without an income for two months was proving to be a serious impediment to this unique opportunity. While the internship would offer Karim substantial practical experience in her field, it would also take her away from classes in DC and her job.

“I knew I would be taking a risk and it would be challenging for me in every way,” Karim said, “but I accepted the offer and I crossed my fingers as I applied for GW’s Knowledge in Action Career Internship Fund and Capital Connection Fund.”

She received support from both funds and was soon packing her bags for Dhaka. At icddr,b—an international research institute that conducts studies on infectious diseases, other threats to public health and methods of health-care delivery—Karim spent two and a half months helping to educate married adolescent women on family planning and unintended pregnancy.

Working in the fields of maternal and child health and reproductive health was not only professionally and academically rewarding, said Karim, but it was also personally fulfilling. Those areas “are very close to my heart because one of my aunts passed away while giving birth before I was born.” Maternal mortality rates are still high in many developing countries and are often associated with unintended pregnancy.

Karim’s time in Dhaka reaffirmed her goal of becoming a reproductive health specialist, helping to empower and educate women, and she credits the financial support she received with helping to launch her career in a global setting: “It made me realize the impact that I, and we as alumni, can have on a student’s personal and professional life, which is vital to their growth and success.”
MISSION

The Milken Institute SPH Board of Advisors provides the best public health educational experience incorporating the school’s core values of scholarship, leadership, scientific rigor, policy analysis and training to foster the next generation of thought leaders, practitioners, policymakers and scientists who will transform public health worldwide, especially for underserved and poor populations.

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Pictured from left to right: Kenneth Moritsugu, Margaret Hamburg, Richard Southby, Roslyn Brock, Lynn Goldman, Diane Knapp, Feygele Jacobs, Ellen Sigal, Peter Kovler (Not pictured: Fred Brown, Ed Greissing and Michael Klowden)
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“Milken Institute SPH is not really 20 years old—we are really 20 years young. We must never stop growing, learning and evolving, for that is how true leaders are made and the only way to achieve excellence. Thank you to all whose vision, drive and leadership brought us to where we are today. I am so proud of the community we have built, and feel certain that the best is yet to come.”

–Dean Lynn R. Goldman