Changing the Practice Landscape
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M y tenure as Dean began in January of this year, and what a welcoming beginning these months have been for me. Yet, in a way, the fall of 2016 marks my true beginning, as I experience my first opportunity to welcome an incoming class of students to the College for Public Health and Social Justice at Saint Louis University. This is an exciting time for our College. I am invigorated by the energy and talent of our students, and I am reminded of what drew me to assuming leadership here: the promise of our students to learn from us, to go and make a difference in the world and to return as our teachers. For when our students come back as alumni, they mentor us and deepen our commitment to our mission as researchers and educators in the service of others.

In this inaugural issue of SoJust, the magazine of The College for Public Health and Social Justice, we seek to share the stories we see as unique and forward-leaning in our mission. You’ll read about some of our faculty, students and alumni, and the work they’re doing in St. Louis and around the globe to advance health and equity. Our magazine’s title represents the most promising and transformational intersection of public health, social work, criminology and criminal justice, health management and applied behavior analysis—our vision for advancing innovative and transdisciplinary co-learning.

As I think about these diverse disciplines that offer independent and connective spaces for our students and faculty share and learn—from training compassionate social workers to preparing ethical students and faculty share and learn—from training compassionate social workers to preparing ethical students and faculty share and learn—from training compassionate social workers to preparing ethical students and faculty share and learn—from training compassionate social workers to preparing ethical students and faculty share and learn—from training compassionate social workers to preparing ethical students and faculty share and learn—from training compassionate social workers to preparing ethical students and faculty share and learn—from training compassionate social workers to preparing ethical students and faculty share and learn—from training compassionate social workers to preparing ethical students and faculty share and learn—from training compassionate social workers to preparing 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Students visited the home of Cuban artist José Rodriguez Fuster during the Global Social Work-Social, Economic and Health Systems in Cuba: Paradigms and Paradoxes summer immersion course. Fuster decorated more than 80 houses in the fishing town of Jaimanitas on the outskirts of Havana.

Matthieu Speaks at White House

Monica Matthieu, assistant professor of social work, joined data scientists, analysts, tech innovators, advocates, clinicians and policy makers for a "day of innovation" at the White House. The event, "Building Partnernesships for Suicide Prevention," brought together experts as part of Global Suicide Prevention Month and Global Mental Health Day. Matthieu spoke on an expert panel about home safety and safe storage of medications, firearms and substances. They are key components of an intervention development program she managed at the National Patient Safety Center on Suicide Prevention, funded by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Choosing Ferguson’s new Chief of Police

The City of Ferguson has been the focus of international attention following the death of Michael Brown in August 2014. Dr. Noelle Fearn, director of the Master of Criminology and Professional Practice program, was one of a select group of individuals given a unique opportunity to move Ferguson forward; she served on a panel of criminal justice experts who helped select the city’s new chief of police, Delrish Moss.

As the city’s first African-American police chief, Moss faces a community fractured by unrest and mistrust.

What are the most important challenges the new chief will face?
Improving police and community relations, filling the vast number of vacancies in the Ferguson Police Department and the implementation of the consent decree with the Department of Justice, which is a plan to overhaul the city’s courts and police department.

What qualities—professional and personal—make for a successful chief?
Integrity, professionalism, leadership skills, the ability to effectively communicate with diverse individuals and groups—talking as well as listening—and the belief in the value of the “community” part of community-oriented policing.

How did you become involved in this selection committee?
Ferguson’s former human resources director, Patrick Young, reached out to me as director of SLU’s criminology and criminal justice programs to discuss a variety of potential ways to develop a stronger partnership between our CCJ programs and the Ferguson Police Department. As a result, I was invited to participate in this critically important review and hiring process.

Of note

Workforce Development Coordinator Wendy LaBenne was elected to Trustee to the Board of Directors at the National Career Development Association, an organization she has been a member of for more than a decade.

Associate Clinical Professor Pamela J. Huggins was selected to serve on an Association of Social Work Boards task force that will explore the knowledge, skills and emerging trends central to effective social work practice, informing the development of future licensing exams.

Assistant Professor of Social Work Jin Huang was appointed to the Council on Social Work Education’s Council on Global Learning and Practice to help develop an agenda for understanding and stimulating the international parameters of social work education.

Professor of Social Work Marla Berg-Weger won a national election to serve as the chair of Social Research and Public Policy, one of the four sections of the Gerontological Society of America.

Assistant Professor of Behavioral Science and Health Education Keon L. Gilbert was elected to the Society for Public Health Education’s Board of Trustees, serving as Trustee for Membership and Leadership.

Assistant Professor of Environmental and Occupational Health Roger Lewis was elected a Fellow of the American Industrial Hygiene Association.

Follow us on Instagram as we catch up with the 2016 Public Health Day of Service at the American Public Health Association Annual Meeting in Denver.

With support from the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health and in partnership with the Colorado School of Public Health, our students are leading this service event at five sites across the city.

PHOTO BY JAMI CURLEY
Raising Women’s Voices

With support from the Missouri Foundation for Health, Dr. Pamela Xaverius teamed up with Lindenwood University’s Deborah Riel and producer Eddie Barnard to collect stories from women in St. Louis and the Bootheel region of southeast Missouri. They found that some of the biggest barriers to a healthy pregnancy have nothing to do with health care. Women discussed a lack of transportation, substandard housing, toxic stress, food deserts and struggling schools.

“We need to hear what’s important to women because they’re the focus of change. Healthy women become healthy moms.”

Hope is Not Enough” is an accessible and eye-opening way to engage government, business, health care, the faith community and others in a collective impact approach: to agree on a common agenda and make a plan that addresses infant mortality from all angles. Xaverius, associate professor of epidemiology, also co-leads training and workforce development activities for the College’s newly-formed research center called REACH: Research and Equity in Action for Child Health.

Launched by an interdisciplinary group of faculty with support from the dean, REACH serves as an academic backbone for community partnerships that advance maternal and child health, with particular attention to highly vulnerable families and social factors that affect health.

Responding to a community in need

Social work faculty are changing the practice landscape in St. Louis and beyond.

Advanced training for professionals working in the community was the need identified by social work faculty members Dr. Marla Berg-Weger and Dr. Michael Mancini when they applied for funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Along with co-project director Dr. John Morley, chair of the geriatrics division at Saint Louis University School of Medicine, Berg-Weger was focused on training primary care health and social service students and providers how to provide high quality care for older adults, while Mancini wanted to teach future social workers how to work with at-risk children and youth. Both applications were funded, putting Saint Louis University front and center in efforts to help two groups at nearly opposite ends of the life span: children and older adults.

Early interventions lead to longer, healthier lives

“We know the practices and services that can help young people. We know what works. What we lack are an adequate number of highly-trained professionals who can implement those practices effectively,” said Mancini, an associate professor of social work.

To address this need, Mancini launched a specialization—a series of courses and practice experiences—focused on at-risk children and youth for graduate social work students. The curriculum includes a two-semester internship with a St. Louis hospital, outpatient behavioral health clinic or residential treatment center.

“Young people who have complex behavioral health needs are at an increased risk for homelessness, violence, incarceration, depression, PTSD, suicide, victimization, chronic health conditions and early death,” said Mancini. “We hope to change the practice landscape in St. Louis so that people can get the help they need earlier so that they can live healthier and longer lives.”

To support students who choose this practice-intensive course, Mancini applied for and received a three-year, $460,000 grant through HRSA’s Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training program. The grant funded 30 students with $10,000 stipends during their field work.

Having external financial support can be a deciding factor in a student’s practice choice. “I wouldn’t have been able to [complete the practicum] without the stipend,” says Erica Marks, M.S.W. ’15, one of the program’s first recipients. The grant also funded three all-day, several partial-day, free professional development workshops for social workers.

A crisis in geriatric health care providers

Ask anyone who has cared for an aging parent or other family member: it is a complicated labor of love. Ask health care providers, and they will tell you the elderly often have multiple health problems and complex conditions that require specialized attention.

“Hope is Not Enough” video sheds light on high infant mortality rates in some Missouri communities.

An estimated one in five Americans will be older than 65 by 2030, while the number of physicians with specialized skills to care for them is declining, putting the health of our elders in jeopardy.

“The need for a well-trained geriatric workforce is at a crisis point,” said Berg-Weger, professor of social work and co-director of the Gateway Geriatric Education Center Workforce Enhancement Program. This is a new initiative funded through a three-year, $2.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

In one of the Center’s major initiatives, more than 240 students, doctors, nurses and other providers who care for older adults came to SLU’s campus for the Summer Geriatric Institute on June 6-7, 2016, making it the University’s largest continuing medical education program.

Nationally-recognized experts, including more than two dozen SLU faculty members from fields such as medicine, nursing, occupational, physical and speech therapy, social work and nutrition presented workshops and sessions on the latest developments in the care of older adults.

“Our Summer Geriatric Institute is one more way Saint Louis University continues to share our expertise in all aspects of geriatrics with care providers from the region,” said Berg-Weger. “All of the presentations were based on the latest research and evidence, with our goal being to elevate the care of our elders to whom we owe so much.”

“Hope is Not Enough” is a form of cognitive stimulation therapy through yoga that can be done sitting or standing. (Photo by Ellen Hutti)
Turning the Corner on Hunger

New evidence on the lasting harms of childhood hunger add urgency to community-based efforts to address food insecurity.

Children who frequently go hungry are more likely to be violent and to have impulse-control issues as adults, according to research led by Dr. Michael Vaughn in the School of Social Work. "The impact of hunger on neurocortical development and functioning may have a hand in explaining the link between hunger and interpersonal violence," Vaughn said.

What happens when a physical or mental disorder prevents an individual from managing his or her benefits payments effectively? Policymakers thought about that back in 1939 when they authorized the payment of benefits to individuals or organizations other than the beneficiary. These "representative payees" are entrusted with managing the beneficiary’s payments for necessities such as rent. Currently, about 3.5 million Social Security disability beneficiaries have representative payees.

"Representative payees are mostly family members, but can also be friends, lawyers, and social workers," said Birkenmaier. "It’s an important way of ensuring beneficiaries have their basic needs met."

Finding beneficiaries who need help

Having a representative payee decreases the risk of homelessness, arrests, hospitalization, substance abuse and other problems. Based on reports from the SSA Inspector General’s office, administrators began to wonder if people who could benefit from a representative payee weren’t getting one.

They were seeing people who are eligible for two types of Social Security benefits for example, retirement and disability—who only have a representative payee for one, says Birkenmaier. "You might guess that if they need a representative payee for one, they probably need it for the other. The whole system clearly needed review."

The committee's report, released in March 2016, argues that a clinical assessment of financial competence may not be adequate. It suggests system-level changes that would enable SSA to determine the financial capability of a beneficiary based on evidence from a range of people who are in a position to observe real-world functioning.

"The problem doesn’t come when someone has trouble in an office with a psychologist or psychiatrist asking them questions," said Birkenmaier. "The ability to meet these basic needs results from an interplay between financial ability and an environment that doesn’t always support good decision-making."

Basic needs, basic freedoms

Currently, the SSA’s determination system classifies beneficiaries as either capable or besequed, but the reality is that capability can deteriorate or improve over time.

For people at risk of becoming financially incapable, the committee recommended a system used by the Department of Veterans Affairs called “supervised direct pay.” Benefits are paid directly to the beneficiary, but with guidance from someone—such as a friend—who can check how money is being handled.

"We were very conscious about making suggestions that would support beneficiaries’ basic autonomy," says Birkenmaier. "Supervised direct pay supports clients’ efforts to be decision-makers in their lives as fully as possible, but having support right there."

Opportunities for social workers

Taking financial capability determination into the real world requires professionals who have frequent and direct contact with beneficiaries. Representative payees and social workers would be a good fit.

"Social workers could do a lot more to assess and intervene in client finances, and I think many aren’t aware they can do that," says Birkenmaier. "Part of the challenge is to better educate our students in what they could be doing to help. Currently, finances are not inherently interwoven well into social work education, which is something we’re working on," says Birkenmaier. "We are offering classes in financial capability at the undergraduate and graduate levels—something that few social work programs offer at this time. While many programs are beginning to integrate financial capability into their courses, our dedicated classes are innovative in this field."

Shacham are evaluating the impact of the St. Louis MetroMarket, a donated city bus repurposed as a mobile farmers market (right). Created by SLU School of Medicine graduate Jeremy Guss, MetroMarket brings healthy food to food desert areas. "To use a new food resource in a community, people must change their established shopping patterns," Shacham said. "We are measuring how MetroMarket can influence shopping behavior and, ultimately, increase food security for neighborhoods with low food access."
Social justice is giving everyone a realistic opportunity by removing the systematic roadblocks that keep people from living better, healthier and more fulfilling lives. As biostatisticians, we try to identify those roadblocks through collection and analysis of data about people’s health and wellbeing.

Being the child of Holocaust survivors and the parent of a son with unique educational needs which require a lot of time, resources, and advocating, this is an issue I think about a lot. How do some communities and individuals manage to thrive in the face of trauma and endless persecution? In other words, how do you build individual and community resilience?

To me, it begins and ends with how one generation prepares the next for the challenges ahead. What type of social and emotional scaffolding is needed to ensure that children’s needs are met first and foremost so they can grow into stronger and more successful adults than the preceding generation? I would venture that every child needs to have a modicum of stability, be it in the form of a predictable schedule, reliable health care, a secure relationship with at least one caring adult, a community that can provide a bit of a safety net and a safe place to vent, or a low conflict environment conducive to getting enough sleep, enough nutritious food, and education. Social justice is finding ways for most children to get most of those, most of the time.
Social justice is not shying away from doing the hard work. Globally, that means not being afraid to work in the most challenging environments, even when most others have left or chosen not to work there.

Dr. Norm White serves as the College’s first Associate Dean for Community Engagement

In 1967, President Lyndon Johnson formed the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. He charged it with explaining the civil unrest in dozens of U.S. cities. The Commission’s findings, known as the Kerner Report, concluded that the nation was “moving toward two societies, one black, one white, separate and unequal.” The implication was that segregation and inequality served as kindling and, often, police violence and abuse provided the spark to ignite unrest.

Norm White invites us to fast forward to the present day and consider the inequity that still disproportionately resides in communities of color. As Ferguson, Baltimore, Charlotte and other cities see demonstrations in response to the use of deadly force by police, White takes on his new role with a solemn optimism. “We have to get this right,” said White, professor of criminology and criminal justice at SLU. “There are people dying because we can’t get this right. There are cities burning because we can’t get this right. We have the opportunity to do something different, and to be present in ways that others can’t.”

Through this new position, White is leading the College’s efforts to partner with community members and organizations. Together, they’ll work and advocate for equity and justice.

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

White has worked with SLU’s Overground Railroad to Literacy project since 2014, overseeing SLU students who commit to providing tutoring and mentoring for children in north St. Louis for a year. The project, which began in one elementary school, has ballooned to more than 70 students and is hosted in four schools and nonprofits.

More recently, White received funding from a coalition of eight foundations for a project he started with Jimmie Edwards and David Mason, both St. Louis Circuit Court judges. The Shut It Down: Closing the School to Prison Pipeline project takes on school disciplinary structures that aren’t up to the task of helping kids with behavioral challenges.

St. Louis leads the nation in school suspension for African-American children. Many kids suspended or expelled from school never return and, instead, enter the justice system.

The project provides faculty and staff at seven public schools with professional development about responding to the complex needs of children and families. “Misbehavior may be related to trauma children have experienced or untreated mental health issues,” said White. “This is about providing a new lens to view disciplinary incidents and the systemic issues that contribute to racial inequities.”

White describes this approach as "creating a quilt of resources" to help ensure educators’ and children’s needs are met. “Our College is unique in its extraordinary intersection of academic disciplines that can be brought to bear in the community,” said White. “We can bring the evidence base and the real world together.”

Back in the ’60s, the Kerner Report concluded: “This deepening racial division is not inevitable. The movement apart can be reversed.”

Today, White puts this into perspective for his work engaging the community. “How do we go out beyond this campus and try to help in ways that we haven’t in the past? Starting with a shared commitment to racial equity is key.”

LEARN MORE about Shut It Down on St. Louis Public Radio’s online multimedia project “We Live Here.”

bit.ly/sojustequity

Your turn!

What does social justice mean to you? Use the hashtag #SoJust and let us hear from you on your favorite social media platform. 👇

Full participation

Jesse Helton, Ph.D.
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF SOCIAL WORK

I define social justice as the ability for all children to participate in daily life— in their families, their communities and in their schools. I study children with disabilities who have been abused or neglected. In my studies, I try to find the right balance between viewing disability as a physiological problem, which requires rehabilitation to improve a deficiency, and viewing it as a social construct, which requires rehabilitation of a child’s environment to remove barriers that hinder full participation. Of course, it takes both types of rehabilitation to provide the best care. But, without social justice, we may end up only focusing on the physiological problems and ways to “fix” a child, instead of thinking of better ways to change physical, environmental and developmental barriers.

Hard work

Anne Sebert Kuhlmann, Ph.D.
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE AND HEALTH EDUCATION

Social justice is not shying away from doing the hard work. Globally, that means not being afraid to work in the most challenging environments, even when most others have left or chosen not to work there.
Public health alum leads SSM Health Saint Louis University Hospital into a new era of health care.

by Marie Dilg

Kate Becker is uniquely qualified to take a lead role in the changes taking place on the Saint Louis University medical center campus. The president and CEO of SSM Health Saint Louis University Hospital is a 2011 graduate of the College for Public Health and Social Justice and one of the few hospital CEOs in the country with an M.P.H.

“I never imagined I’d be sitting in this office,” said Becker. “But my background in public health has proven to be the perfect framework for discussing what an integrated delivery model looks like and where a medical center fits into that model.”

Since entering into a partnership in 2015, SSM Health and Saint Louis University have been developing an integrated model of care that blends health promotion and clinical care. Conceptualized for years as two distinct, albeit overlapping systems, policymakers and providers are finding that integrating individual care and a public health approach into a single system can save resources and improve patient outcomes.

“Over the past decade I’ve gone to meetings where there’d be consistent epiphanies about integrated care,” said Becker, who, before joining SSM Health, was associate general counselor for Saint Louis University and CEO for SLUCare, the University’s multispecialty medical practice. “You’d have to remind people that there’s a whole discipline dedicated to what they were discussing, that there were people you could ask to help with these initiatives.

“We operated in separate universes with very little crossover for such a long time,” Becker said. “Public health was supposed to deal with seatbelts and smoking and fluoride in the water. Traditional care was supposed to deal with coughs, colds and heart attacks. We’re doing a much better job now of seeing how we intersect because that’s really what integrated health care delivery is – private health care in a public health care space.”

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) has encouraged integration of public and private health care since its enactment in 2010. While the principal goal of the ACA is to improve access to the traditional health care system via expansion of affordable insurance, there are specific provisions that encourage health promotion and disease prevention. Individual health, said Becker, is now considered inseparable from the health of the larger community.
CONNECTIVE CARE
Becker said the goal of any integrated model is to keep people healthy and to deal with chronic conditions better so patients are using more primary care resources and less of the more expensive acute care resources.

“There are some things along the continuum of care, such as trauma, transplant and cardiac care that always are going to take place in a hospital setting,” said Becker. “The new hospital will be dedicated to providing the excellent tertiary and quaternary care that SLU is known for historically. Yet, we expect a lot of folks to be using the expanded outpatient services in the new ambulatory care center.

“It’s about getting patients in the right place at the right time. If we do that, those who should be inpatient are inpatient and those who do not need to be inpatient don’t have to be.”

Toward this end, SSM Health joined the Integrated Health Network, an organization of St. Louis metro area hospitals, federally qualified community health centers and other safety net institutions that work to increase patient access to affordable health care. It also embedded a care referral coordinator in the hospital emergency room to help patients connect with community providers after discharge. For patients admitted to the hospital, disease-specific nurse navigators educate patients about their conditions and help remove barriers to their follow-up care.

“Consequences can be very serious when patients get off track,” said Becker. “The cycle of violence needs, her team will identify community resources available to victims of violence to help bridge the gap between clinical care and community care. They’ll explore how hospital culture affects the care of victims of violence. They’ll also determine what hospitals need to be successful at adopting and sustaining programs that help address the social determinants of community violence.

The idea for the yearlong study grew out of meetings last year between SLU, Washington University and other community-based agencies dedicated to serving vulnerable populations and advancing evidence-based violence prevention through a range of education, research and training activities.

“Public health views challenges through a transdisciplinary lens,” said Weaver. “And we are very committed with all of our initiatives to connect the classroom to our community in meaningful ways.”

Weaver said SSM Health and SLU have been strong partners in her efforts to promote prevention programs. She also launched a successful educational initiative at the Danis Pediatric Clinic to promote positive parenting and reduce all types of childhood injuries — the number one killer of children.
Katie Belpulsi
Social work summer immersion course
Dublin, Ireland
Belpulsi (left) speaks with U.S. Ambassador and SLU alum Kevin O’Malley at the Embassy.

Kellie Stewart
M.P.H. student internship
Cochabamba, Bolivia
Goals: To improve Spanish, to practically apply things learned in M.P.H. classes, to learn from health professionals. “Everyone thought that I was a doctor!”

Jessica Clark
M.P.H. student internship
Kathmandu, Nepal
Internship goals: to teach middle school students about sanitation, hygiene and infectious diseases.

Sam Wasala
M.P.H. student internship
Lwala Community Alliance, Kenya
“Here Eunice and Alice are teaching me the importance of planting vegetables in raised beds to better retain water moisture in the soil.”

Global Dispatches
Students and faculty report from far-flung destinations.

Stephanie Olomukoro
M.P.H. student internship
Cape Town, South Africa, Heart of Cape Town Museum
“I didn’t realize the first successful heart transplant in the world was done by Christian Barnard in South Africa!”

Jessica Buck
Belize 2020 partnership, St. Martin DePorres Jesuit parish and school
Belize City, Belize
In a city rife with gang violence, Buck takes anthropometric measurements as part of an assessment looking at the effects of post traumatic stress disorder on education.

Dr. Anne Sebert-Kuhlmann
Research methods workshop
Comayagua, Honduras
“This year I surveyed nursing students, and Master’s of Epidemiology students at the national university of Honduras in Spanish and still had a smile on my face at the end of the day!”

Stephanie Olomukoro
M.P.H. student internship
Cape Town, South Africa, Heart of Cape Town Museum
“I didn’t realize the first successful heart transplant in the world was done by Christian Barnard in South Africa!”

Erik Hoaglund and Beth Carron
Spring break immersion trip
West Virginia
Hoaglund (center) and Carron (right) sing and play at a community bluegrass jam. Students spend a week in rural West Virginia working to improve the health outcomes for underserved communities.

Jessica Clark
M.P.H. student internship
Kathmandu, Nepal
Internship goals: to teach middle school students about sanitation, hygiene and infectious diseases.

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“This year I surveyed nursing students, and Master’s of Epidemiology students at the national university of Honduras in Spanish and still had a smile on my face at the end of the day!”

CHECK OUT the “Hear it from the Authors” podcast for an engaging conversation on the growing crisis of chronic disease in low and middle-income countries.

The podcast is a companion to “Non-communicable Diseases in Africa and the Global South,” a special supplement of the Journal of Health Education and Behavior co-edited by Dr. Collins Airhihenbuwa.

bit.ly/SoJustPodcast
Developing leaders in and out of the classroom

Our students develop the skills and tools needed to confront the greatest challenges to the health of individuals and the communities they live in.

The College for Public Health and Social Justice at Saint Louis University is the only academic unit of its kind among the nearly 250 Catholic institutions of higher education in the United States. With a focus on finding innovative and collaborative solutions for complex global health problems, the college offers diverse degree programs united by our commitment to social justice. Our Jesuit identity is a foundation which inspires the moral and ethical principles of our social justice mission: working with and in communities to improve health and well-being, with a focus on health equity for the disadvantaged and vulnerable.

TRUE BLUE

With a B.S. in public health from the College for Public Health and Social Justice in hand, dual M.P.H./M.D. student Rebecca Rohde is a true SLU believer. She’s also a believer in the power of medicine and public health to be better together. Rohde’s HPV vaccine research won first place at SLU’s 51st annual Alpha Omega Alpha medical honor society Research Forum. She and her colleagues surveyed more than 900 students, and found significant gaps in vaccine knowledge and uptake. College-aged students account for nearly 75% of all new HPV infections.

FROM CLASS ASSIGNMENT TO LAW

Dr. Philip Abraham sees firsthand the harm tobacco does to young people as a pediatric hospitalist at Washington University School of Medicine. But it was his role as a student in the Executive Master of Health Administration program that opened the door to making change happen. Abraham (left, with supporter) developed a policy brief for his health policy class and presented it to St. Louis County Council member Sam Page, who worked to bring a bill forward for consideration. Dr. Kevin Broom in the Department of Health Management and Policy and SLUCare pediatrician Dr. Matt Broom also spoke to the Council in support of the bill, which was voted into law in September. Known as Tobacco21, the law bans the sale of all tobacco products to persons under 21 years old.

“I enrolled in the M.H.A. program at SLU because I wanted to learn ways we can increase access to health care while also cutting costs,” said Abraham. “I researched Tobacco21 for Dr. Kimberly Enard’s class, and I figured, why not bring this to St. Louis?”

MESSAGES OF HOPE

This September, Master of Social Work student Aaron Laxton led a discussion with students, faculty and staff about the June 2016 shooting in a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida.

“People need a space where they can decompress, process and express how they’re feeling right now,” said Laxton. He initiated the conversation through a social work lens: looking at the invisible trauma that ripples throughout society in the wake of gun violence.

Laxton, who is director of client services for Criminal Justice Ministry in addition to his studies, is a well-known HIV/AIDS activist. In the wake of Orlando, he began recording “messages of hope” to share with the victims’ families, first from the LGBTQ community in St. Louis, and then more broadly.

PUBLIC HEALTH SCHOLAR BOWL

SLU’s annual Scholar Bowl brings together teams from more than a dozen undergraduate public health programs from across the nation to compete in case study and quiz competitions. Learn more about this student-run event at: bit.ly/SoJustScholarBowl
Douglas A. Ries (A&S ’69, GRAD ’72)

Looking back on a more than 40-year career leading faith-based health care organizations—including 25 years as president of Cardinal Glennon Children’s Hospital—Doug Ries has made an imprint on health care in St. Louis and beyond.

Yet, with a physician father trained at Saint Louis University School of Medicine and adult children working in hospital administration and physical therapy, Ries’ career is but one chapter in his family’s health care story. “It just seems to run in our family,” says Ries.

That’s why the Ries family’s gift to the College for Public Health and Social Justice felt like a natural next step. Their endowed scholarship will allow students to experience the Jesuit education which has made such an impact on the Ries family.

“The value of servant leadership found in Jesuit philosophy forms the basis of why my wife Sandy and I are so committed to health and to education.”

To learn more about how you can support the College for Public Health and Social Justice, please contact the Office of Development and Alumni Engagement:

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Dr. Brett Emo checks a rooftop air monitoring station, which is part of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s RadNet environmental radiation monitoring system.