Urban Health Institute Updates

Johns Hopkins Urban Health Institute Director Steps Down

After 13 years at the helm, Robert Wm. Blum officially stepped down as the director of the Urban Health Institute (UHI) on June 30th. As of July 1st, our program director, Amy Gawad, assumed the role of interim executive director. Ms. Gawad joined the UHI as program director in 2006. Prior to that, Amy was at the Institute of Medicine where she worked on several consensus reports for the Board on Children, Youth, and Families.

In 2006 Robert Blum—who at the time was chair of the Department of Population, Family, and Reproductive Health out of the Bloomberg School of Public Health—took on the role of interim director of the UHI and in 2007 was selected to lead and carry out the Urban Health Institute’s mission of strengthening and supporting university-community collaborations to improve the health and well-being of Baltimore city residents.

“This is one of the greatest honors I have ever had to lead the Urban Health Institute and we are well poised for a terrific future.”

The UHI is grateful to have had Dr. Blum leading us in many of our activities and initiatives, such as the annual Social Determinants of Health Symposia, launching the Bunting Neighborhood Leadership Program, Community-Driven Research Day, Baltimore Dialogues, and our capacity-building workshops, to name just a few.

A steering committee, co-chaired by Joshua Sharfstein, vice dean for Public Health Practice and Community Engagement, and Lisa Cooper, director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Equity, have been working to develop a plan of action for the future of the Urban Health Institute. We look forward to a new chapter and appreciate you, our friends, for being a part of the journey.

To read Dr. Blum’s farewell statement please visit bit.ly/UHITransition. Catch a glimpse of his time here with the Urban Health Institute, by visiting bit.ly/DrBlumMemories.
We have experienced a lot of new and exciting changes here at the Urban Health Institute, including the re-branding of our website! In June, we launched our new and improved online presence designed with you, our friends, in mind. Our site now includes our recently launched initiatives, such as our Strategic Consultation Grants, easy navigation, bright colors, and lots of pictures, capturing some of our favorite moments over the last few years.

Feel free to take a browse at urbanhealth.jhu.edu to check out the new features and updates. We hope you enjoy! You might even recognize a face or two.

NEW PROGRAM LAUNCH!

STRATEGIC CONSULTATION GRANTS FOR BALTIMORE CITY

This new funding opportunity was created to support faculty working in partnership with Baltimore City government. Funds are awarded to proposals that address requests from city government for assistance on specific projects that improve the health and well-being of Baltimore communities.

To learn more, please visit bit.ly/UHIFunding

2019 HENRIETTA LACKS MEMORIAL AWARD WINNER: MERIT HEALTH LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

On October 5th, the Johns Hopkins Urban Health Institute presented their annual Henrietta Lacks Memorial Award to MERIT Health Leadership Academy. Working collaboratively with Johns Hopkins Medicine, MERIT educates, mentors, and provides resources to students from across Baltimore City to enter the field of medicine.

“MERIT’s mission is to educate and empower students from underrepresented backgrounds to become health care professionals and change agents, equipped to advance equity.”

Devon Harris, MERIT’s 2021 class president

With efforts led by Jake Weinfeld, MERIT executive director, Dr. Sherita Golden, Vice President and Chief Diversity officer of Johns Hopkins Medicine, Dr. David Hellman Vice Dean and Chairman, Department of Medicine of Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center, and a dedicated team of community and Hopkins experts, students are connected and exposed to the endless possibilities they can explore in medicine, STEM, and community health.

The group plans to use the $15,000 award to expand its impact by increasing the students they serve from 94 to 225 scholars in the 2019-2020 academic year. In addition, the award will also deepen their programming so that they can empower their scholars to work as health leaders in their communities.

To learn more about the MERIT Health Leadership Academy, visit our YouTube channel, bit.ly/2019HLMA, to watch the official Henrietta Lacks Memorial Award video.

* The Urban Health Institute would also like to congratulate our runner ups for the 2019 Henrietta Lacks Memorial Award. Shepherd’s Clinic and Sisters Together and Reaching, Inc. (STAR) both received a $2,500 award for their ongoing collaborations with Johns Hopkins.
“We’re not going to criminalize children because they’re having a bad day,” said Akil Hamm, chief of the school police force.

On October 3rd, educators, community organizers, politicians, and community leaders from Baltimore and beyond convened in Levering Hall to confront and tackle issues, such as systematic racism, poverty, and school policing, that are impacting youth in Baltimore City.

The efforts were led by the Urban Health Institute’s associate director, Richard Lofton, PhD in partnership with the Johns Hopkins School of Education and the Baltimore City Office of Civil Rights.

Panels included teachers, social workers, school resource officers, professors, and more. Many of them coming from as near as North East Baltimore to as far as California. While everyone brought different solutions, observations, and their experiences working with youth to the table, many shared similar sentiments about creating a safe and healthy environment for youth of Baltimore and working collectively as a community to ensure Baltimore City students were receiving the highest quality learning experience.

You can read more about the day’s events at Johns Hopkins official news center, the Hub, by visiting bit.ly/SchoolsPrisonsPoverty

HOW COMMUNITIES AND PEOPLE THRIVE!

On May 13th, the Johns Hopkins Urban Health Institute and Office of the Provost hosted its eighth annual Social Determinants of Health Symposium. This year’s theme was focused on how communities and people thrive. Discussions throughout the day took on a life-course approach by analyzing barriers to, and achievements in, health from infancy and children to adults and seniors.

Keynote speaker Dr. Camara Phyllis Jones kicked off the Symposium discussing the importance of health equity, shared the barriers that cause health disparities, and provided solutions that can help eliminate those disparities and achieve health equity for all.

Through her example of the metaphorical cliff, Dr. Jones went on to pinpoint racism and poverty as two major barriers to sustained improvements to health outcomes.

“We must be about moving the population away from the cliff by addressing poverty, adverse neighborhood conditions and the like […] we must address racism, sexism, and capitalism if we want to achieve social justice and eliminate health disparities.”

Housing commissioner Michael Braverman spoke during the Healthy Communities’ panel discussion and touched on the value of understanding racism, its history, and how it affects the housing structure in Baltimore.

“We need to start from a place of understanding slavery and institutionalized racism and how it plays out in Baltimore city, how it is woven into the fabric of present day, and how we make sure it doesn’t define the future.”

Led by James Piper Bond, the Healthy Communities’ panel also included Pastor Gary Dittman of Amazing Grace Church and Dr. Joel Gittelsohn of Johns Hopkins University.

The community is screaming we just aren’t listening to what they are saying […] they are the experts on determining what will make life better. Any programming that happens should come from the community”, explained Pastor Gary Dittman.

Rebecca Dineen sparked off the discussion on the infants, Children, and Families panel. Sharing the impact racism and segregation have on current communities in Baltimore City, also known as the “White L” and “Black Butterfly.”

Sharing the difference between the “White L” and “Black Butterfly,” Ms. Dineen acknowledged that in white communities there are low crimes, poverty, and some wealth while in Black communities, also known as the “Black Butterfly,” you see high poverty, high infant mortality, high crime, and low life expectancy.

“Where you are born in the city ultimately determines your life course and these acts didn’t develop by accident […] racial residential segregation is hard wired in Baltimore and deliberate political action created this”, said Ms. Dineen.

Joined by Professor Anne Duggan, Debbie Rock, and Danitza Simpson-Escano, the conversation included messages about looking beyond the health of a child and analyzing the overall health of the family and environment in which the child is borned in, and eliminating stressors that contribute to the health and well-being of infants, children, and youth — such as poverty.

“Our goal should be helping families to break multi-generational poverty […] that means just because grandma started off on welfare doesn’t mean her adult child or grandchild has to continue it. We can help that cycle be broken.”

Debbie Rock

Sarah Hemminger, Joni Hollifield, Tamar Mendelson, and Dana Stein spoke on the Adolescent and Youth panel. During the discussion, panels shared their experiences working face to face with youth in the community and what they’ve learned works and did not work.

“Do you know how frustrating it must feel? To see the playing field, know that you can play on it, but you can’t get in the game?”, said Joseph T. Jones, Jr., founder of the Center for Urban Families, as he kicked off the Adult and Seniors panel with Dr. Michelle Carlson, Dr. Sarah Szanton, and Melvin Wilson.

Panelists expressed the importance of empowering adults and seniors economically through job security and opportunity and passing legislation that equip adults and seniors to thrive in their communities.

The Philanthropy panel closed out the day Baltimore foundation leaders — Robert Embry, Lisa Hamilton, and Shanaysha Sauls — gathered to discuss the commitment of philanthropists in Baltimore City and shared how their involvement often goes beyond providing funding but also involves community engagement, meaningful dialogue, and gathering data to help inform institutions on what is happening in the community.

“It’s important for us to align our strategies, continue to be in conversation with one another, and complement one another as members of the philanthropic institutions of Baltimore. We each bring different sets of knowledge to bare in the conversation […] we become a virtuous circle with the people being in the middle.”

To view photos from the May 13th Social Determinants of Health Symposium please visit our Facebook page bit.ly/SDH-2019
**4TH ANNUAL LATINX HEALTH CONFERENCE**

On March 19th, community and religious leaders, educators, health professionals, and students gathered at Sacred Heart for the Johns Hopkins Centro SOL’s 4th Annual Latinx Health Conference “Mind Your Health: Community-Centered Solutions to Mental Health Issues”.

“Diversity without voice leads to bad science”

David Hayes-Bautista

Keynote speakers Margarita Alegria and David Hayes-Bautista both shared their perspectives on mental health disparities in the Latinx community. Dr. Alegria, Chief of the Disparities Research Unit at Massachusetts General Hospital discussed the role of feasible and sustainable community-based interventions. Dr. Hayes-Bautista, Director of the Center for the Study of Latino Health and Culture at UCLA’s School of Medicine, spoke about the impact of demographic shifts in mental health outcomes.

Attendees also had the chance to walk through a photo exhibit, Portraits of the Journey, by Tomas Ayuso. Listen to spoken word, hear personal testimonies from Latinx advocates and trauma survivors, and reflect with one another about the information and data shared from health experts and their own personal experiences in the fight to end disparities amongst Latinx. To learn more about the conference, please visit [bit.ly/JHLatinx](bit.ly/JHLatinx).

**Urban Health Institute Spotlights**

**SMALL GRANT SPOTLIGHT: A COMMUNITY-DRIVEN RESEARCH APPROACH TO ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH IN BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

*This post is a summarized version. To read the full article, please visit our blog [bit.ly/UHIBlog](bit.ly/UHIBlog).*

Every year the Johns Hopkins Urban Health Institute provides funding to community-university—graduate, faculty, and undergraduate—partnerships that most successfully demonstrate the potential for advancing the health and well-being of the residents of Baltimore.

In 2017, Arshdeep Kaur and Madison Dutson, at the time undergrad students at Johns Hopkins, and Shane Gordon became recipients of UHI’s Small Grant Award following their participation in our Community-Driven Research Day for their partnership and work with Cool Green Schools in Baltimore City. Below is a blog Arshdeep and Madison wrote about the on-going collaboration. Read the project abstract here [bit.ly/2017CommunityGrant](bit.ly/2017CommunityGrant).

**BUNTING NEIGHBORHOOD LEADERSHIP FELLOW SPOTLIGHT! JONATHAN MOORE**

2018 Bunting Fellow, Jonathan Moore, sat down with Restoring the Village Radio to talk about his partnership with PiKaso and the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health to bring community owned Wi-Fi to Baltimore neighborhoods, starting in the Sandtown-Winchester community.

Visit [bit.ly/JonathanMooreInterview](bit.ly/JonathanMooreInterview) to learn more about this amazing collaboration and how Jonathan’s experience with the Bunting Neighborhood Leadership Program has helped push his work forward.
This summer we had the opportunity to participate in the Johns Hopkins Summer Job Program. 480 Baltimore City Youth interned at Johns Hopkins University and Hospital and Zola was one of those special students we had the honor to have on our team assisting with several communications and marketing efforts.

We are so grateful for all the great work Zola did during her time with us and appreciate Johns Hopkins Institution for providing various centers and departments with the opportunity to help increase employment among our youth. Get to know more about Zola below!

Zola Purville is a 10th grade student at Baltimore City College, where she is an active member of the varsity soccer and tennis teams, school choir, and Medical Minds Club. Zola sees a future here at Johns Hopkins and aspires to enter the field of medicine as a trauma surgeon. Born in Manhattan, New York, Zola has called Baltimore home since the age of seven.