



## Release

### **UAlbany Establishes the Center for the Elimination of Minority Health Disparities**

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ALBANY, N.Y. (May 26, 2005) -- The University at Albany formally established today the Center for the Elimination of Minority Health Disparities (CEMHD) in a ceremony hosted by President Kermit L. Hall. The center is funded by a three-year \$1.24 million grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and endorsed by the New York State Department of Health. CEMHD will focus its efforts on smaller cities, including Amsterdam and Albany.

"We are launching this center with a very important focus - the health of our communities," said Hall. "It is clear that there are significant disparities in the health status of minorities, from life expectancy to infant mortality rates. This center is dedicated to not simply reducing disparities, but the far more ambitious goal of eliminating disparities."

"In a state where minorities make up nearly 39 percent of the population and where 169 languages are spoken, one of our highest priorities is ensuring that all New Yorkers have the opportunity to achieve optimum health," said Dr. Antonia Novello, New York State Commissioner of Health. "This new Center will fill an important need by developing effective community-based approaches for improving minority health that can be applied here in the Capital District and replicated in communities across New York State."

"Communities of minority persons in smaller cities and towns differ in important ways from sizeable minority populations of large metropolitan areas," said center director and associate dean of research for the College of Arts and Sciences, Lawrence Schell. "Within each city, we will seek to engage local community organizations, hospitals and county departments of health to advance collaboration and research that will improve access, prevention, utilization and health among minority citizens."

The center is uniquely multidisciplinary, with collaborative efforts of the deans and faculty from the College of Arts and Sciences as well as the schools of Education, Public Health and Social Welfare.

- Associate professor of social welfare Blanca Ramos will oversee the education core, which will be responsible for course development in order to build a health-related workforce from within the targeted communities and improve communication between existing health workers and minorities on health matters.
- Associate professor of sociology Nancy Denton will head up the mentoring and training core. She will enhance the capacity of UAlbany researchers to conduct health disparities studies with community partners and communicate findings to the larger community.
- School of Education dean Susan Phillips will be in charge of the outreach and dissemination core, with the task of constructing a strategy to disseminate to minority communities messages that promote the understanding and counteracting

of health disparities.

- Distinguished Professor of sociology Richard Alba and associate professor of epidemiology and biostatistics David Strogatz will head up the research core, each overseeing several pilot studies focused on the distribution and causes of health disparities in New York cities.

The center will work to:

- Strengthen relationships with community partners to advance collaboration on research and on programs that will improve access utilization and health among community groups and citizens.
- Ascertain research needs for understanding sources of health disparities in smaller cities, particularly with regard to policies and practices that inhibit access and use of primary prevention measures.
- Build capacity among University at Albany faculty, especially junior faculty, to conduct active and expert research in health disparities.
- Develop and apply means to disseminate information on health care through activities at several levels, including education for health care providers schools and the community.
- Secure future funding from NIH to sustain the relationship between the University and upstate New York's minority communities.

As an NIH EXPORT (Excellence in Partnerships for Community Outreach, Research on Health Disparities and Training) center, CEMHD will identify health problems and seek ways to reduce, and eventually eliminate, minority health inequities by building the University's health disparities research capacity, and by strengthening community partners' ability to collaborate on research and intervention programs. For more information, visit <http://www.albany.edu/cemhd/>.

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*The University at Albany's broad mission of excellence in undergraduate and graduate education, research and public service engages more than 16,000 diverse students in nine degree-granting schools and colleges. For more information about this internationally ranked institution, visit <http://www.albany.edu/>. For UAlbany's extensive roster of faculty experts, visit [www.albany.edu/news/experts.htm](http://www.albany.edu/news/experts.htm).*

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