

Dr. Axelrod's VISION

By Carol Olechowski

In the 1980s, David Axelrod, M.D., then the New York State Commissioner of Health, collaborated with then-University at Albany President Vincent O'Leary to establish the **School of Public Health**. Affiliated with Albany Medical Center, and now with Bassett Health care, the unique, world-class partnership Axelrod envisioned has flourished, attracting students from all over the world and preparing them for leadership roles in the public health field, both abroad and in the U.S.

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David Axelrod, M.D.



A driving force for innovation in health care and health policy, David Axelrod, M.D., was also the architect of UAlbany's School of Public Health.

Axelrod, a Harvard graduate, worked as a research scientist at the National Institutes of Health prior to joining the staff of the New York State Department of Health in the late 1960s. A decade later, then-Gov. Hugh Carey appointed him health commissioner; Axelrod held that post until ill health forced his retirement in 1991. He passed away three years later at age 59.

Axelrod worked with Vincent O'Leary, then president of the University, to make the School of Public Health a reality. His friends and colleagues established the *Axelrod Fellowship* to honor his memory – and to attract outstanding students to the school.



Elena Alexeevna Varavikova, M.D., M.P.H. '95

A Lifetime of Knowledge and Friendship

Worried about her language skills and apprehensive about leaving her daughter, Tatiana, and her mother behind in Russia, Elena Alexeevna Varavikova was torn about studying in the United States. But “my mother knew [that enrolling at UAlbany's School of Public Health] was a fantastic opportunity and told me I must go,” recalls Varavikova, a physician with a specialization in infectious diseases and epidemiology. Eventually, the desire to “earn a diploma from the U.S.” and “make stronger arguments that would persuade decision-makers not to privatize and decentralize the national health system in Russia, as the World Bank suggested at the time,” overcame the Moscow Medical Academy graduate's concerns.

Varavikova needn't have worried: A network of supporters awaited her arrival at the school. Then-Dean David O. Carpenter; Clinical Associate Professor David Momrow, her mentor and adviser; Dr. Harvey Bernard and his wife, Pat; the Albany-Tula Alliance; and Thaisa and Charles Beach, her ‘American parents,’ who came to her rescue when a visa glitch detained her at Kennedy Airport, all became “wonderful friends.”

As a student in the “very intense” Health Policy and Management program, Varavikova participated in a research project, Health Coverage and Cardiac Mortality in New York State. She also began co-authoring, with Professor Ted Tulchinsky, *The New Public Health: An Introduction for the 21st Century*, later translated into eight languages. The second edition of the widely used textbook was published in 2009.

Varavikova found SPH “uniquely situated to provide the links between theory and practice of public health. Many of the faculty have professional responsibilities, including basic and applied research, in the New York State Department of Health, and students there deal with real, ongoing public health issues.”

After completing additional studies at Harvard and the European Institute of Business Administration in France, Varavikova joined the World Health Organization. Now a lead researcher at the Central Research Institute for Public Health Management and IT Development in Moscow, she is working toward “creating quality health systems and improving public health” in Russia. She also lectures to Ph.D. students.

Last fall, Varavikova reunited in Tula and Moscow with SPH Dean Philip C. Nasca and Clinical Associate Professor Carol Whittaker, “a driving force and an example for me. I am very grateful to Carol.”

School of Public Health

Location: George Education Center, East Campus

Enrollment: 420

Number of Faculty: 276*

Accredited by: the Council on Education for Public Health

**Includes full-time UAlbany faculty, as well as faculty from the New York State Department of Health, other state and local agencies, community-based organizations, and local academic institutions*

Visit the School of Public Health on the Web at www.albany.edu/sph/.



George Sakvarelidze, M.D., M.P.H. '02

Learning by Example

As a student at the School of Public Health, George Sakvarelidze took *Biostatistics*, *Applied Epidemiology*, *Epidemiology of Infectious Diseases* and other “challenging” courses that would ultimately prove “extremely helpful in my day-to-day work.” At the same time, he was influenced by the example of his professors at the School of Public Health. He found their outlook and dedication as integral to the learning experience as the course content – and just as key to his career success.

Sakvarelidze graduated from the State Medical University of Georgia in 1994 with an M.D., then completed a post-graduate internship in pediatrics (infectious diseases). In 2000, supported by an Edmund Muskie Fellowship,

he enrolled at SPH. After receiving an M.P.H. in epidemiology, he returned to his native country, the Republic of Georgia, and served as monitoring and evaluation (M&E) officer for UNICEF. During his three years in Tbilisi, “I dealt with health, protection and education programs that entailed collaboration with government and international partners, development of situation analysis related to women and children, planning and management of household surveys, studies and evaluations related to joint UNICEF-government cooperation.”

Later, as regional coordinator for Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys in UNICEF’s Regional Office in Geneva, he coordinated the MICS program for 20 countries in Eastern Europe and

Central Asia. Sakvarelidze’s work there impacted policy decisions related to health and other issues concerning children.

The School of Public Health curriculum prepared Sakvarelidze well for those positions, and for his current work with The Global Fund to Fight

The School of Public Health curriculum prepared Sakvarelidze well for his current work with The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. As senior technical officer for the Monitoring & Evaluation Support Team, he tracks and analyzes HIV-, TB- and

malaria-related grants in two regions of South Asia and East Asia and the Pacific. The principal component of his work, he notes, is “the ability to provide evidence for informed decision making and advocating for policy change, which, in turn, directly affect people of different ages, origins, and ethnicity or culture.”

Public health is a coordinated and committed effort to

- tackle current issues, such as bioterrorism and West Nile virus
- prevent epidemics and the spread of disease
- protect against environmental hazards
- prevent violence, health disparities, injuries and obesity
- promote healthy behaviors
- respond to disasters and assist community recovery
- assure the quality and accessibility of health services



George Sakvarelidze

Paata Chikvaidze
works in WHO's
Cairo office.

**Paata Chikvaidze, M.D.,
Ph.D., M.P.H. '05**

“An Honor and a Privilege”

As a medical liaison for EngenderHealth, a New York City-based international private voluntary organization (PVO), Paata Chikvaidze traveled extensively throughout the former Soviet Union in the 1990s, “lecturing and providing training for reproductive health-service providers, and observing developments and changes in public-sector services, specifically in the health-care field. The difficult, often painful years of change still presented some opportunities for improvements in health-service delivery.”

By 2000, the Republic of Georgia native “was established as a leading professional in my country in the field of reproductive endocrinology and gynecologic surgery.” Simultaneously, Georgia and other post-Soviet countries had “started showing signs of recovery after a deep economic and political crisis.” And Chikvaidze, a Tbilisi State Medical University graduate, was determined to use his “strong interest in public health and policy” to “develop and strengthen the health-care service-delivery system in Georgia, and influence the improvement of women’s health status as a whole, rather than on the individual level through clinical practice.” Meantime, he realized the need “to obtain academic training in public health and health-systems research.”



Chikvaidze recalls his SPH professors as “examples of personal excellence in teaching and research.”

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The Fogarty International Fellowship recipient enrolled in the master's program in health policy and management master's program at SPH. There, he met “Dr. Dale Morse, my point of contact with the Fogarty Program and my mentor.” His professors, including Morse, Timothy Hoff, M. Levy, Shadi Saleh, Barry Sherman, Wendy Weller, Michael Zdeb, Kirsten Davison and Benjamin Shaw, offered “interactive and demanding classes, and also served as examples of personal excellence in teaching and research. It was truly an honor and a privilege to be a student at the school.”

After earning his M.P.H., Chikvaidze returned to Georgia to head the World Bank-sponsored Health Policy Unit at the National Institute of Health. He currently serves as a medical officer in the Women's and Reproductive Health Unit at the World Health Organization Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean. At work in Cairo, Egypt, Chikvaidze applies “the knowledge and experience I gained at UAlbany's SPH, whether I am giving technical advice to member states in strengthening national maternal health programs, setting the agenda for reproductive health research, or doing program monitoring and evaluation.”



**Enkhjin Bavuu, M.D.,
M.P.H.'02**

Helping “a Whole Nation”

Although he earned an M.D. from the Russian State Medical University in Moscow, Enkhjin Bavuu “never practiced medicine. I went directly into public health.” Why? At most, he reasoned, “a doctor can help 4,000 to 5,000 people a year. A public health professional can help a whole nation.”

In his native Mongolia, Bavuu notes, “there is no strict division between medical and public health fields; most of the public health professionals are doctors.” So, supported by a competitively awarded scholarship from the Open Society Institute's Mongolian Professional Fellowship Program (MPFP), he enrolled at UAlbany's School of Public Health. “My concentration in epidemiology has been very useful in my day-to-day work at Mongolia's Ministry of Health and now, at The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. It gave me the skills that help me understand a situation,



Enkhjin Bavuu

“A doctor can help 4,000 to 5,000 people a year. A public health professional can help a whole nation.”

gather relevant information to make informed decisions, formulate policies and implement public health programs.”

In his work with the Asia Unit of East Asia and the Pacific Team, Bavuu administers grants that the Geneva-based Global Fund provides to developing countries. He acknowledges that managing a portfolio of \$1.5 billion U.S. “is quite challenging sometimes, but it is always very interesting, because I can see how some additional support provided to national disease-control programs makes a big difference and saves millions of lives. And that is the most fulfilling thing about public health – one decision can affect the lives and health of thousands, or even millions, of people. This is what attracted me to the field of public health when I first joined the Ministry of Health after graduation from a medical school,” observes Bavuu, who is responsible for overseeing Global Fund grants in China.



Vanessa DeYulius

“An Incredible Place to Be”

M.P.H. candidate Vanessa DeYulius spent part of last summer in “an incredible place”: Tanzania.

The non-profit organization Peercorps, which seeks to improve the lives of Tanzanian women, youth and children via grassroots health and education programs, sponsored her 12-week visit to the East African country. There, DeYulius taught at an orphanage and elementary school in Arusha; “the kids are full of energy and absolutely love me,” she noted in an e-mail message to family and friends. Accompanied by a Tanzanian medical student, she also participated in an epidemiological child injury-prevention project, recording the “many things to look out for ... in the field,” such as “open sewers, broken electrical wires, wild animals, tall grass and extremely uneven roads.” Together, they surveyed more than 2,000 households in Dar es Salaam, “collecting the first data ever in this city regarding childhood injuries.” The entire internship experience, which also included teaching health and English to local school-children, fit in well with her studies in social behavior and community health.

Throughout her stay, DeYulius provided lively descriptions of everyday life to the folks back home. She awoke to “my first rooster alarm clock” at 5 a.m. daily; ate a diet rich in rice, beans and vegetables, but very little meat; bathed from a bucket; and slept under a mosquito net. She also survived food poisoning (as well as the



During her internship in Tanzania last summer, Vanessa DeYulius taught at an orphanage and elementary school.

pill to cure it), a few nine-hour bus rides – and numerous marriage proposals. The Cresson, Pa., native had time for a few adventures, too, including safaris through the Serengeti and Ngorongoro, where she snapped numerous pictures of zebras, lions and other wildlife; and a speedboat ride to Zanzibar, where she spent a few days with other Peercorps interns.

Her overall impression? “I think I was supposed to be born in Tanzania! This is truly an incredible place to be, and it’s beautiful.”

DeYulius will graduate from the School of Public Health this May.



Lt. Katrina Mosley, M.P.H. '06, USPHS

Understanding Public Health



It was coincidence that led Katrina Mosley to UAlbany’s School of Public Health.

“I visited the campus with my best friend [Zoe Gibson, M.P.H. '06] because she was interested in the school,” recalls the Atlanta, Ga., native, who earned a B.S. in biology from Tuskegee University. “Before we left, I had an application in my hand! I had no intention of applying. But

once I discovered the many opportunities, such as state partnerships and field experience, I would have as a student there, I submitted my application. To top it off, I was offered a fellowship!”

At SPH, Mosley studied community health and behavioral science. Commissioned a lieutenant in the United States Public Health Service last July, she is assigned to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s New Orleans District Office in Nashville. Mosley’s duty station covers several states, including Alabama, Louisiana and Tennessee, so she often travels for her job and for training. Her responsibilities focus primarily

on “conducting inspections of manufacturers of FDA-regulated products.”

Mosley is pleased with the opportunities SPH opened to her. “My UAlbany studies have provided me the knowledge base and skill set necessary to carry out many of my duties. Obtaining an M.P.H. allowed me to fully understand the importance of the nation’s health, as well as health on the community and individual levels. The communication skills and knowledge gained from my associations with various organizations and agencies while attending the School of Public Health have been tremendous assets,” Mosley observes.

Agnes Mukasa, M.P.H.'04

Raising Awareness

As a research scientist with the New York State Department of Health, Agnes Mukasa realizes that public health “is very much a part of everyday life,” and good public health practices benefit everyone.

Growing up in East Africa, Mukasa had firsthand experience with new and recurring challenges – such as malaria, a life-threatening parasitic disease transmitted by mosquitoes – that frequently cropped up on the public health front. People living in tropical climates have learned to reduce malaria morbidity “by using mosquito nets, window screens, and eliminating potential mosquito breeding sites (e.g., stagnant water), near their homes,” explains Mukasa. Similarly, when the first cases of West Nile Virus, another mosquito-borne disease, surfaced in New York in 1999, state and local health departments, advised citizens to keep their yards and other outdoor areas free of standing water.

Born in Uganda and educated in Kenya, Mukasa completed her first degree in biochemistry at Chestnut Hill College in Philadelphia. She returned to Africa, worked in Botswana and Ghana for several years, then enrolled at SPH in 2002 to complement her “multicultural, multilingual public health practical experience with a solid public health educational foundation.

The University offered the most favorable tuition, and the Health Policy, Management and Behavior program allowed me to explore facets of public health that most interested me.”

Mukasa, who represented the School of Public Health Graduate Student Organization to the University at Albany

GSO and was a member of UAlbany’s Council on Academic Freedom and Ethics, enjoyed her time at the school. “I value the professional and personal relationships forged during my time there. I received tremendous support from professors, staff and fellow students – in particular, David O. Carpenter, Dwight Williams, Benjamin Shaw, Carol Whittaker and Lue V. Ellis. Their outstanding academic instruction, mentorship and support gave me the confidence to apply for a position within the health department’s Center for Environmental Health. Five years later, still assigned to the Bureau of Toxic Substance Assessment within the center, I am still grateful.



At SPH, Agnes Mukasa complemented her practical experience with “a solid public health educational foundation.”

Mukasa’s work at CEH includes assessing health impacts associated with exposure to pollutants in environmental media and formulating information on exposure reduction strategies for those pollutants. She is also an active member of the Department of Health Intra-Agency Task Force on Women’s Issues.



A World of Opportunity

A UAlbany degree opens the way to many career options in the public health field.

By Amy Halloran, B.A.'90

Stephen Skwish, B.S.'86, M.S.'89

Studying science was a practical choice for Stephen Skwish, who spent his high school years in Poughkeepsie, N.Y. Says Skwish: "I was much more a math person than a science person. But when I looked at schools, I saw that the one program you could go through that guaranteed you a job was the medical sciences."

Skwish worked as a medical technologist in a hospital lab for a year before returning to the University to begin his studies at SPH. The first student to graduate from the school, he defended his thesis in October 1989 and "officially graduated" that December with an M.S. in environmental health and toxicology, then "went right into the pharmaceutical industry, doing drug discovery for kidney

disease. Some of the skill sets I'd developed in school – doing primary cell cultures, actually making primary cells from animals and doing any sort of extended cell culture work – were very desirable at the time in the field." He notes that the industry, given its nature, favored graduates of public health schools.

For 20 years, Skwish has worked for pharmaceutical companies based in New Jersey. While his work began



For 20 years, Stephen Skwish has worked for pharmaceutical companies based in New Jersey.

in labs, its focus shifted. "I started as more of a cell biologist," explains Skwish, currently senior research scientist II at Bristol-Myers Squibb in Princeton. "Now, I'm working at the computer. I moved into screening and automation, and therefore got into the hardware and equipment, and eventually into writing software. I currently work almost purely in informatics, capturing data, analyzing data for the scientists and doing unique visualizations for them."

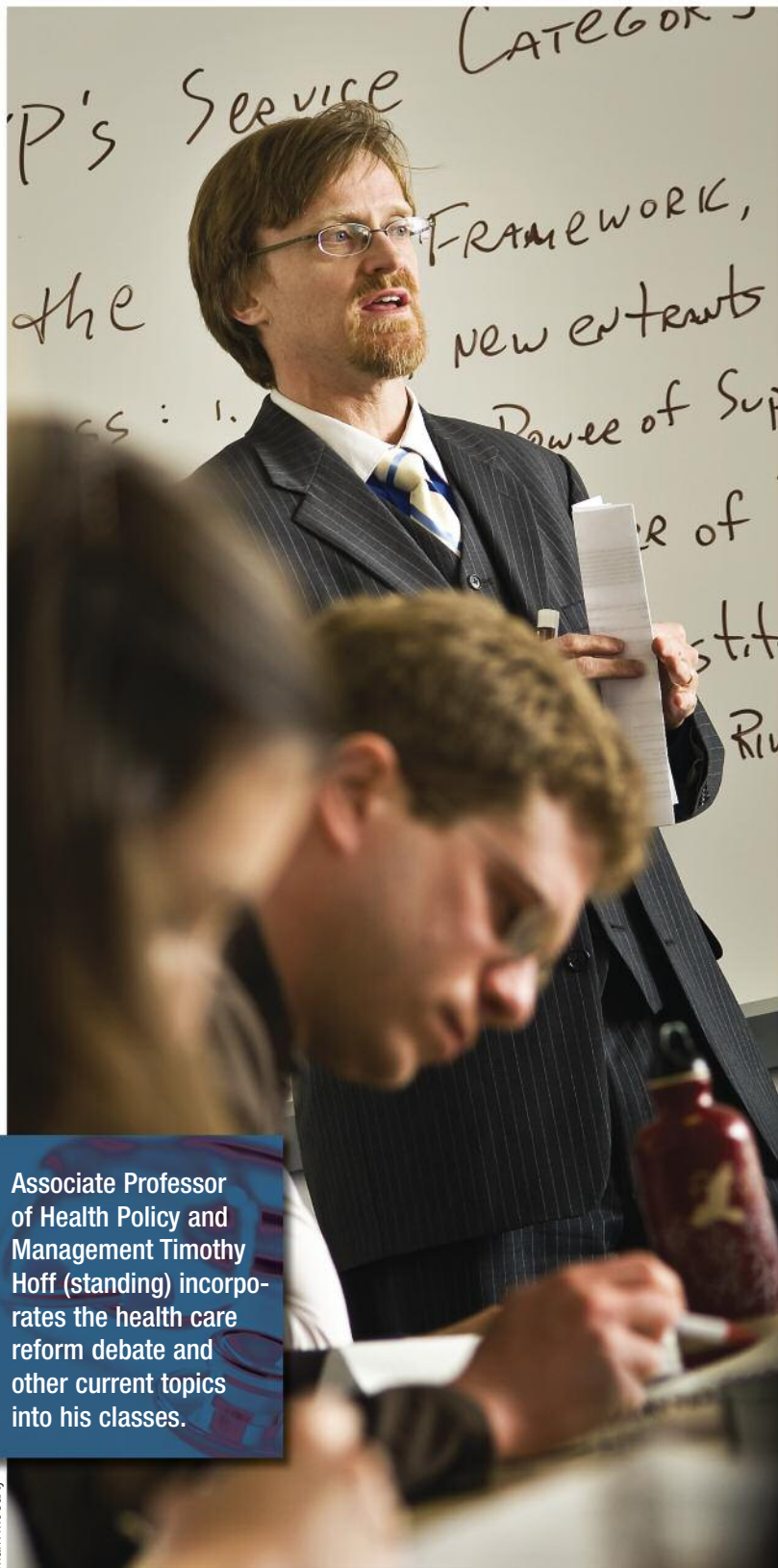
Timothy Hoff, B.S.'87, Ph.D.'97

After receiving an undergraduate degree in business administration, Timothy Hoff worked for a decade in hospital administration and health-care consulting, then returned to his *alma mater* to pursue a doctorate at the Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy.

"I trained as a sociologist," says the New York City native. "I was really interested in looking at the social structure of medicine and health care, to better understand how the U.S. health system was evolving as a business and what it means for our society. And some of that interest came from working in administration and witnessing the everyday realities firsthand."



Mark McCarty



Associate Professor of Health Policy and Management Timothy Hoff (standing) incorporates the health care reform debate and other current topics into his classes.

Mark McCarty

Hoff's book *Practice Under Pressure: Primary Care Physicians and Their Medicine in the 21st Century* (Rutgers University Press, October 2009) explores that general theme. Drawing on interviews with 95 primary care physicians, it potentially serves many audiences, from academics and policy-makers to students. "The book contains lessons for whatever health care reform we enact – how to make it more effective and how to define the role that our primary care system is going to play," adds the author.

Now an associate professor at UAlbany's School of Public Health, Hoff brings a real-world perspective to both his research and teaching by incorporating current topics, such as the health care reform debate, into his classes. "I could be teaching about health care in a business school, or in a school of public administration or policy," he observes. "But I think what's nice about being in a school of public health is the prime focus on trying to improve people's lives through better health. The work being done here, both research and education, is important, because it's linked directly to furthering that goal."



Charles B. Eaton, M.D., M.S.'90

As a "Sputnik-era" kid raised in Cold Spring, N.Y., Charles "Chuck" Eaton won awards in high school math and science and took part in summer internship programs for future engineers, "but I leaned toward the biological sciences and their application." During college, "I worked summers as an orderly at a local community hospital and enjoyed patient care."

Eaton, who graduated from the University of Rochester in 1973 with a degree in biology, completed his medical studies in 1977 at SUNY Health Science Center in Syracuse. He trained as a family physician in rural Virginia and participated in the National Health Service Corps, working with migrant farm workers in Rochester, N.Y., before

Eaton attributes much of his professional success to the training and expertise he received at SPH.

accepting a faculty position in family practice at Albany Medical College in 1982. During his seven years at the college, Eaton rose through the academic ranks to become residency director and director of the sports medicine fellowship. He also developed a research interest in the prevention of heart disease through exercise and lifestyle change.

Eaton enrolled at UAlbany's School of Public Health "to train to do research in preventive cardiology" and continued to work at Albany Medical Center while earning his M.S. in epidemiology. After graduation, "I combined the master's with my medical training and took a faculty position at Brown University School of Medicine, and joined the Pawtucket Heart Health Program investigator team." PHHP, a community-intervention trial, sought to modify health behaviors by encouraging physical activity, healthy diet and smoking cessation.

For the past 19 years, Eaton has been at Brown University School of Medicine, where he attained the rank of professor. He currently directs The Center for Primary Care &

Prevention (CPCP), which seeks to promote research, enrich knowledge, and improve practice in primary care and prevention.

Continuously funded for the past 15 years as an investigator, Eaton is principal investigator for multiple National Institutes of Health-funded studies, including the landmark Women's Health Initiative, and has contributed to more than 100 peer-reviewed scientific publications. The recipient of several teaching and mentoring awards, he supervises medical students, primary care residents, M.P.H. and Ph.D. students in epidemiology, and junior faculty receiving career-development awards.

Eaton attributes much of his success to the training and expertise he received at SPH: "The faculty and students, many of whom were employees of the New York State Department of Health, were superb."



Charles Eaton



Christina Hansen

Christina Hansen, M.P.H.'09 Influencing Public Health Policy

Christina Hansen was troubled by the case of Michelle Morse, a cancer-stricken New Hampshire college senior who, in 2005, faced forfeiting her health insurance if she took a doctor-advised medical leave to deal with her illness. Morse's death six months after graduation sparked New Hampshire to pass Michelle's Law, ensuring health coverage for that state's college students fighting serious illnesses.

As a UAlbany School of Public Health graduate student completing a Summer 2008 internship with the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, Hansen advanced a grassroots effort to bring Michelle's Law to the federal level. She created an "advocacy guidebook" and toolkit to foster volunteer efforts by college students, and she designed a campaign that pushed a petition through the National Collegiate Summit and other events. A federal version of Michelle's Law passed the U.S. Congress; former President George W. Bush signed the legislation in October 2008.

In January 2009, UAlbany's Center for Women in Government and Civil Society named Hansen a Fellow in Public Policy. The fellowship allowed

her to work in the Albany office of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, where she managed a grant to improve electronic fetal monitoring and put together a committee of OB-GYNs to address patient-safety policies.

Hansen, a native of Muscatine, Iowa, relishes other opportunities to use her expertise in maternal and child health and women's health to advance public health policy. Currently, she is a program specialist with the Health Division at the Office of Management and Budget in Washington, D.C. "My education and experiences through the University at Albany have prepared me to come an influential leader in the field of public health," Hansen says.

— Vincent P. Reda, B.A.'74