

JCPH Class Night 2015

Every year prior to commencement, JCPH celebrates Class Night to acknowledge and honor the achievements of students who earn a Master's degree and graduate in the current academic year. Open to family, friends, and colleagues, Class Night also provides opportunities to recognize outstanding students, faculty and staff.

This year the *Distinguished Student Award* was presented to **Elizabeth (Eli) deArmas**, a graduate of the MPH program. Eli was recognized not only for her academic achievements, but her passion and devotion to public health activities and service. She was actively involved with Jefferson's Global Health Student Initiative Committee, where she was instrumental in organizing an international *Ebola* symposium and fundraiser. As vice president of JeffSAPHE (Student Activities for Public Health Education), she helped the organization to gain recognition for their team effort in fundraising for Ebola. Eli gave a heartwarming thank you to the JCPH community, who supported her and welcomed her when she first moved to Philadelphia from Miami. Eli has a background in journalism and, during her time at JCPH, she authored articles for *Population Health Matters* and contributed to the *Nash on Health Policy* blog.



Brian Zepka was presented with the *Distinguished Capstone Project* recognition for "Addressing Hispanic Adolescent Mental Health in the Texas Border Region: A Policy Analysis." The purpose of this project was to provide informed advice to policy makers and facilitate decision-making concerning access to culturally competent mental health services for Hispanic adolescents in this region. As a result of this project, Brian was able to make recommendations for expanding the number of school counselors in each district. Brian is very interested in communicable disease prevention, emerging infectious diseases, and health policy issues within the fields of mental health and environmental health.

Brian interned at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children, where he worked on infection prevention education and policy issues. Brian was actively involved with JeffSAPHE community service projects.

Student access to practical, real-life professional experiences play an important role in public health programs. JCPH is fortunate to work with a number of outstanding organizations that support the MPH clerkships. This year JCPH presented the *Distinguished Clerkship Sponsor to Public Citizens for Youth and Children* (PCCY), a non-profit organization focused on improving the lives of children. Colleen McCauley, Health Policy Director, accepted the award and shared her encouraging words of wisdom to JCPH graduates.

Every year JCPH recognizes the exemplary contributions of faculty. **Martha (Marty) Romney, RN, MS, JD, MPH**, was this year's recipient of the *Award for Teaching Excellence*. Marty has been a mainstay of the JCPH public health program since the School's inception and brings expertise and experience in key areas – cancer, obesity, workplace wellness, health disparities and



Brian Zepka, recipient of the *Distinguished Capstone Award*.



Eli DeArmas, recipient of the *Distinguished Student award*, with Dr. Simmons and Dr. Nash.

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cultural competency. Marty has an amazing set of credentials in law, public health, nursing and policy. She is currently working on completing her dissertation for the Doctor of Juridical Science in Health Law at the Widener University School of Law.

Marty's students describe her as "exceptionally knowledgeable, very well organized, always prepared, always positive, and always enthusiastic" about the subject matter. Marty's success is due to the fact that she creates an open, respectful environment in her class that supports the sharing of different perspectives.

Marty is deeply committed to service. She is a member of both the Pennsylvania and Philadelphia Bar Associations, having served as Secretary and Chair of the Medico-Legal Committee of the Philadelphia group. Nationally, she remains active in the American Health Lawyers Association and the American Public Health Association. She works with the Maternity Care Coalition, serves on the Executive Committee of the College of Physicians' Section on Public Health and Preventive Medicine, and sits on the Board of Directors of both the Greater Philadelphia Business Coalition on Health and the Health Promotion Council. At Jefferson, she serves on the University's Grade Appeal and Judicial Boards and chairs the JCPH Committee on Curriculum and Academic Policy. She also serves as President of the Columbia University School of Nursing Alumni Association.

The JCPH *Distinguished Service Award* is intended to recognize individuals who perform the needed services for JCPH that are considered crucial but often unrecognized because they are hidden behind the scenes. This year, **Nancy Chernett** is the recipient of this award.

In her role as Clerkship Coordinator and Capstone Coordinator, she has truly gone above and beyond the call of duty to assure that JCPH MPH students have a meaningful practicum experience, and that they are challenged to produce the best Capstone project possible.

Nancy is a gerontologist who specializes in family care giving and healthy aging; she is also a specialist in cultural competency in health and human services delivery. She is co-creator and instructor for the Cultural Humility and Competence for Health Professionals and Population Health course, and co-creator of the interactive learning modules in cultural competence for iCE – Jefferson's innovative online learning initiative. Nancy majored in psychology at Case Western Reserve University and went on to complete a master's degree in audiology, also at Case Western. She obtained her MPH from Ohio State University.

When Nancy first came to Jefferson in 2000, she worked with the University's Center for Applied Research on Aging and Health (CARAH), where she worked on a number of research projects that centered on family caregiving for persons with dementia. These projects often involved working in many Philadelphia communities and getting involved with non-profit agencies that serviced the needs of these communities. Her research at CARAH led to a series of well-received peer-reviewed publications which continued after she joined JCPH in 2010.

Nancy has helped to locate, evaluate, and place students in more than 70 different Clerkship sites throughout the Philadelphia region and coordinated 197 different Capstone Projects, including 12



JCPH Clerkship and Capstone Coordinator, and Instructor Nancy Chernett

where she served as Chair or Preceptor. This is an amazing accomplishment. She performed dual roles while serving as JCPH faculty, and initially was the first Director of Academic and Student Affairs.

When not teaching, researching, mentoring or supervising Clerkships and Capstone Projects, Nancy devotes herself to various humanitarian projects and volunteer work. Her energy and willingness to work on behalf of others is awe-inspiring. She is an activist and investor in the Hunger Project, and actively involved in the Center for Advocacy for the Rights and Interests of the Elderly (CARIE) and supports Eldernet of Lower Merion Township. She is a trained facilitator of the Pachamama Alliance's "Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream," a symposium committed to bringing forth an "environmentally sustainable, socially just, and spiritually fulfilling presence on the planet."

Nancy will retire this July. She has certainly been an enormous asset to JCPH and we thank her for being an inspiration to students and colleagues. She will be sorely missed by all.

To access capstone presentations of recent MPH graduates [click here](#).