

JCPH Class Night 2016

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. This year's Class Night also included recognition of those who received a graduate certificate in Operational Excellence. Open to family, friends, and colleagues, Class Night also provides opportunities to recognize outstanding students, faculty and staff.

The *Distinguished Student Award* was presented to **Karie Youngdahl**, a graduate of the MPH program. Karie was recognized for her consistent outstanding dedication to public health and academic achievements. Karie is Director of HistoryofVaccines.org and Special Digital Projects at the The College of Physicians of Philadelphia and is the project director and author of the nationally recognized "The History of Vaccines" booklet that was published in 2013. "*Predictors of Human Papillomavirus Vaccination Series Completion in Philadelphia Adolescents*" was the focus of her capstone presentation. Karie also recently received the Outstanding Student of the Year Award by the College of Physicians Section on Public Health and Preventive Medicine.

Philip Manasseh was presented with the *Distinguished Capstone Project* in recognition of his work on "*Barriers and Facilitators to Cervical Cancer Screening among Iraqi Refugees Resettled in Philadelphia: A Qualitative Analysis of Patient and Provider Perceptions.*" The purpose of Philip's project was to not only identify barriers to cervical cancer screening among recently resettled Middle-Eastern refugees, but to recommend potential solutions.

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 the [Jefferson Center for Urban Health](http://JeffersonCenterforUrbanHealth.org). Under the leadership of Dr. Plumb and Dr. Brawer, the goal of the Center is to improve the health status of individuals and targeted communities through a multifaceted initiative.

Dr. Speakman presented the *James B. Erdmann, PhD Student Award* for Excellence in Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Practice to MPH student **April W. Smith**. This award is given to Thomas Jefferson University students whose efforts have positively demonstrated impacted the institution and its interprofessional education programs.

Every year JCPH recognizes the exemplary contributions of faculty. **Richard V. Pepino, MSS, MS**, was this year's recipient of the *Award for Teaching Excellence*. Rich has been a mainstay of our public health program since 2011, when he first taught *PBH 507: Fundamentals of Environmental Science* to our public health students. He has been enlightening them ever since about both the wonders and hazards of the environment in our daily lives. JCPH is not the first or only institution to recognize Professor Pepino's exceptional teaching skills: Drexel University recognized him with its Laura S. Campbell Distinguished Teaching Award in 2005, and in 2006 Franklin & Marshall College, Lancaster, PA recognized him with its Most Influential Professor Award for Natural Science.

Rich Pepino has always been interested in *studying* the environment and *educating* people about its impact on health. He is very committed to establishing sound public policies when it comes to our health and the environment we live in. Rich holds an A.B. in biology from LaSalle University and two master's degrees from Villanova University – one in biology and one in Science Education;



Philip Manasseh with Dr. Nash and Dr. Golab



Karie Youngdahl with Dr. Golab

he has also completed post-master's work in Environmental Sciences at Drexel University.

Rich discovered his enjoyment and passion for teaching back in the '60s and '70s when he began his career by teaching high school chemistry for ten years, mostly at Malvern Prep and Penn Charter. After teaching high school, Rich moved to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ("EPA") in its Region III Philadelphia office, where he worked from 1978 to 2006, serving as Director, Office of Environmental Programs, for 11 of those 28 years. During this time he also directed the EPA Office of Watersheds, directed strategic planning for environmental efforts in our region, and served as a representative to the U.S EPA Working Group on Emerging Pathogens. When he retired from the EPA after 28 years, he devoted his efforts to directing the Public Policy Program at Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster, PA. During his long career, and reflective of his commitment to environmental education, Rich has taught students at Cabrini College (29 years),

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Drexel University (21 years), and the University of Pennsylvania (13 years).

In addition to Jefferson, Rich continues to teach at Penn where he coordinates the prestigious Benjamin Franklin Scholars Program for Academically Based Community Service Education in the Earth & Environmental Science Department. He also serves as a Deputy Director in Penn's Center of Excellence in Environmental Toxicology, where, with research funding from the National Institute for Environmental Health Sciences, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the City of Philadelphia, he provides experiential opportunities to undergraduate students to study the impact of toxic substances in 7 communities. Rich has contributed to multiple peer-reviewed publications illustrating both his concern about the impact of the environment on our health and his advocacy to establish sensible and sustainable policies with respect to this issue. One example is his 2014 article in the *Journal of Community Health*, written with colleagues in response to activities in Pennsylvania, entitled "Fracking: Citizens' Concerns Regarding the Economic, Environmental, Health and Social Impacts of Unconventional Natural Gas Drilling Operations."

Many factors have made Rich Pepino such a successful teacher and his courses so memorable, characteristics that were constantly mentioned and appreciated by his students: first, he likes to tell stories, and second, he encourages class discussions. Stories, we know, are perhaps the ultimate teaching tool because we tend to remember them and we can relate to them. And class discussions, in the hands of a master like Rich Pepino, are an excellent way to encourage critical thinking and to achieve retained learning.

Here is what students had to say about his storytelling and class discussions:

"Your anecdotes from the field" were great and so was your "sense of humor."

"You are great at teaching through storytelling which keeps me interested and also helps me to remember the lectures."

"I liked the discussion aspect of the course and the willingness to engage students and explore a variety of viewpoints."

Perhaps this student gave the best summary of the reasons for his success: "Professor Pepino is a wonderful, engaging and charismatic instructor. I totally dug this class. He possesses a mastery of the subject matter and an innate ability to engage students."

On a more personal note, Rich is a native Philadelphian who grew up in West Philadelphia's Overbrook neighborhood. He has 4 siblings and he is 20 years younger than his oldest sibling. His brother, Alfred, is a proud graduate of Jefferson Medical College. He and his wife, Carmella, have been married 44 years, and they have 3 wonderful children, all of whom have careers in education, and 5 grandchildren who keep them constantly active and enthusiastic about life. "Teaching at Jeff has been a wonderful experience," says Rich. "The students are delightful and respectful. I try not to over teach, but rather encourage the students to explore the topics that most interest them along the way. Today's students are just so bright. I find being the facilitator is a more critical role than the prescriptive learning style that I grew up with."



Dr. Brawer and Dr. Plumb



Richard Pepino



April Smith with Dr. Nash and Dr. Speakman



Graduates of the Certificate Program in Operational Excellence with Dennis R. Delisle, ScD, MHSA, FACE, Adjunct Assistant Professor, JCHP (center). Left to right: Kamini Patel, Katie Kennedy, Robert Bartosz, Cynthia Line, and Kathleen Jaffe.

Graduate Certificates in Operational Excellence were awarded to:

Jude Andrews, RN, BSN, OCN

Robert Bartosz, MHA

Kathleen Jaffe, MSN

Katie E. Kennedy, MPH

Cynthia L. Line, PhD

Kamini Patel, MSN, MBA

Cathy Ricker, MS, RN, LDN

Lawrence D. Ward, MD, MPH, FACP