



Welcome from...

Marja M. Hurley, M.D.

*Professor of Medicine
Associate Dean & Director
Health Career Opportunity Programs
University of Connecticut Health Center*

This year has been a tremendous year for the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs. The impact of these programs on helping students realize their dreams of becoming health professionals is seen in many different ways. This year all graduating seniors participating in the high school Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative (Aetna HPPI) Saturday Academy were accepted into a four-year college.

We had over 200 middle school, high school and college students participating in our 2011 Aetna HPPI Summer Programs sponsored by the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs (HCOP). During the academic year 2011-2012, we anticipate over 1,000 students participating in our after-school, partner high schools, Aetna HPPI Saturday Academy and college programs. Early exposure to the various fields in the biomedical sciences will ultimately increase the diverse pool of students who pursue careers in medicine.

HCOP is an integral part of the Schools of Medicine, Dental Medicine and Graduate educational community at the UConn Health Center. The Schools of Medicine, Dental Medicine and the Biomedical Graduate Program are actively committed to the recruitment, retention and graduation of diverse medical, dental, and graduate stu-

dent students who are capable of providing culturally competent health care.

The Aetna HPPI Programs and activities are designed, coordinated and implemented through this department. They have proven to be top-notch because the underrepresented students who have successfully completed their undergraduate degrees have actualized their goals of entering medical, dental and graduate school. It is for this reason that the programs and activities sponsored through the HCOP Department are recognized as a national model. To date, we have accomplished our goals and continue to develop new programs and fine-tune existing ones.

I would like to thank our entire faculty, staff and students at the Health Center and partner institutions for their dedication and support of these programs. I would also like to thank all of our funders for their continued financial support of our programs. A special recognition goes to the legislators of the State of Connecticut who have provided Aetna HPPI with state funds to support some of our existing programmatic initiatives. We are also very grateful to Dr. Peter Lopez for his generous gift that established an endowed scholarship in support of our programs.

Read about the Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative and Pipeline programs at:

www.hcop.uchc.edu



A note from...

Granville Wrensford, Ph.D., C.R.A.

*Assistant Dean & Associate Director
Health Career Opportunity Programs
University of Connecticut Health Center*

The year has been very exciting with the many programs and activities that the HCOP Department sponsors. Interest among students, parents and educators alike has been increasing. We have visited many middle and high schools as well as colleges and universities throughout the State of Connecticut. We have also visited a few colleges in Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Georgia.

We held discussions with some additional middle schools that are interested in our Great Explorations after-school middle school program and we hope to add a few more during the next academic year. We also held discussions with several organizations that are interested in collaborating with the department in the activities.

During our annual Upward Bound Conference in December, students and counselors from the Granville Academy participated for the first time. This year also saw an increase in the number of students participating in our annual Bridge to the Future Science Mentoring Conference.

We had over 500 students participating in our summer and academic year programs. We interacted with numerous additional students during recruitment and informational sessions. It pleases me to see such a large number of students excited about the health sciences and careers in the health professions. I am grateful to the many individuals who have contributed to the success of the programs.

During the past year, the HCOP Department has added two new staff members - Michelle Thomas and Marlyn Davila. I would like to welcome them to the department.

As we prepare for another year, I must acknowledge the parents, guardians and students of the programs for their firm commitment. A special thank you also to Dr. Hurley and the HCOP staff, faculty and other professionals here at the Health Center and the larger community who have volunteered their time to mentor and interact with the participants in our programs, Dr. David Williams and Dr. Menard of the Greater Hartford campus, Dr. Lee Aggison Jr., and Dr. Ruth Washington at the Storrs campus for their invaluable help.

Summer 2011 Aetna HPPI Academy Staff (Greater Hartford Campus)



Mr. Keith Carter, M.H.R.
Community Based Educational
Specialist and Aetna HPPI
Academy Program
Coordinator.



Ms. Shaneca Napier
Lead Peer Counselor.



Ms. Judy Abogunde & Mr. Mark Montalvo
Peer Counselors.



Ms. Cecilia Ortega & Mr. Adrian Howell
Peer Counselors.

*Dr. Wrensford and his staff would like to thank Dr. Menard
and his staff at the University of Connecticut,
Greater Hartford Campus.*

Congratulations to...

Kevon Rennie, D.M.D.

Dentist, Dental Student, Mentor



Dr. Kevon Rennie was born in Trinidad and Tobago where he graduated from Presentation College, San Fernando, Trinidad. He arrived in the United States in January 2005 to attend college at Florida A&M University, where in 2007 he earned his bachelor's degree in Biochemistry. He is currently completing his General Practice Residency Program at Danbury Hospital, where he serves

mainly minority populations. His goal is to continue working with underserved populations in the future.

Dr. Rennie's first contact with HCOP came in the summer of 2007 when he was selected as a candidate for the Summer Research Fellowship Program. Because of his strong pledge to give back to the programs, Dr. Rennie worked intimately for several years during dental school as a mentor with the students of the Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative Academy. His contributions to the programs are above and beyond expectation.

Dr. Rennie recalls that his best HCOP experience was mentoring and teaching the Junior Doctors Academy students. He states, "I discovered a joy for reaching out to the younger students and inspiring them to do great things, regardless of their background or situations in life." He leaves the following words of advice and encouragement to all up-and-coming students interested in the health professions. "Don't give up. Never give up. The road ahead may be difficult at times but keep the faith, believe in yourself, surround yourself with others that believe in you and keep your eye on the prize."

Dr. Rennie wishes to recognize the following people as the most influential people who contributed to making his dream a reality: Dr. Marja Hurley for believing in him and giving him the opportunities to challenge himself and allowing him to grow into the person he knew he could become; Dr. Sarita Arteaga for her continued support and driving him to be the best he could be; and Dr. Cynthia Hodge for helping him carve out a career path and setting his dreams of becoming a dentist in motion.

He would like to express gratitude to all of his professors,

including Dr. Yvonne Grimm-Jorgensen for taking the time to help him through the tough classes; Dr. Ellen Eisenberg for teaching him the power of questions and to never stop asking questions until a complete answer is given; and Dr. Melissa Ing for being patient, kind, and supportive through his tough clinical years. Above all, he would like to thank his family and friends for the unwavering support throughout the years.

Shanica Napier, B.S.

Formerly a Jumpstart Student, Now UConn Alumna



Born in Jamaica and emigrating to the United States at the age of three, Shanica Napier remembers being moved from place to place without knowing how long it would be before her family would find a place they could someday call home. This was not something she enjoyed, but at a young age she discovered she could create positive experiences

out of her harsh environment.

Napier participated in the Aetna HPPI Academy, where she met a very inspiring person, Petra Clark-Dufner, who possessed the educational influence she longed for. "If it was not for the love and support Mrs. Clark-Dufner had shown me I don't know how I would have found the strength to continue my fight," says Napier. She has never forgotten the positive reinforcements she gained during the years she participated as a student in the Aetna HPPI Academy. Napier's involvement with the Aetna HPPI Academy extends over seven years. Whether it was participating in the various programs offered by the pipeline, or lending a helping hand she always found herself giving back to the same programs that helped her.

She is currently the lead peer counselor with the Aetna HPPI Academy and holds her position with the highest esteem. On May 8, 2011 Napier received her Bachelor of Science in Allied Health Sciences from the University of Connecticut. Her future plans are to pursue a master's degree in Public Health and Nursing. Napier says "Being a first generation college

graduate is an accomplishment, but my conscience will not allow me to settle for a bachelor’s degree, and I definitely will not be fulfilling my destiny with the completion of a master’s degree. Education is very important in today’s fast paced economy and I seek to acquire as much knowledge as possible. I must also continue to set the pace for the rest of my family who shall follow in my footsteps; meaning I must take large steps and leave deep impressions so that they will understand the adversity I had to overcome.”



Lekesha Williams, M.S.

Friend, Supporter, and former Aetna HPPI Academy Peer Counselor, Now a 2011 Graduate of Neuroscience



Ms. Lekesha Williams began her educational journey in Anderson, South Carolina, where she graduated from T. L. Hanna High School in 2001. She received numerous academic awards, including being named Gates Millennium Scholar, Clemson/Coca-Cola Scholar, top minority student graduate, and Who’s Who Among America’s High School Students. She earned her

Bachelor of Science in Biological Sciences from Clemson University in 2006. While pursuing her high school and college education, she found ways to combine her love for the sciences with her drive to help underrepresented and disadvantaged youth succeed at life. Williams began her journey with the Aetna HPPI Academy via Kaplan where she continues to work as a program coordinator and liaison for the Aetna HPPI Academy. Prior to her work with the HCOP Department, Williams provided similar academic enrichment to K-5th grade students in South Carolina, and K-12th grade students in Tennessee.

In 2011, Williams received her Master of Science in Neuroscience from the University of Hartford. She plans to continue to be a positive influence in the lives of youths, including the bright students in the Aetna HPPI Academy. Ultimately her plans are to pursue a Medical Doctorate Degree, specializing in pediatric neurology. She looks forward to continuing her service towards helping young under-representative individuals navigate through diversity and accomplish their educational dreams.

Congratulations Senior Doctors Academy Graduates 2010-2011 Academic Year

- Addison, Dajee
- Brady, Kyle
- Burge, Alison
- Garcia, Lilliana
- Gomes, Rosemarie
- Haynes, Nicola
- James, Dante
- Mendoza, Diana
- Mitchell, Meadeshia
- Pawshuk, William
- Walker, Serika
- Almonte, Megan
- Brennan, Daniel
- Edwards, Robert
- Garcia, John
- Griffiths, Nnyeko
- Headley, Jarrett
- Lor, Joshua
- Miller, Marissa
- Montero, Katerina
- Valentine, Anthony



Congratulations to Our Mentors

University of Connecticut Health Center Medical and Dental School 2011 Graduates

- Kevon Rennie, D.M.D.
- Yuriy May, D.M.D.
- Anya Rappoport-Rost, D.M.D.
- Robert Claycomb, M.D./Ph.D.
- Tariq Lescouflair, M.D.

Sharon and Peter Lopez Endowed Scholarship Established

Dr. Peter Lopez, an orthopedic surgeon in Tampa, Florida and a UConn School of Medicine Alumnus, has donated a gift of \$25,000 in support of the Health Career Opportunity Programs activities.

The gift established the Sharon and Peter Lopez Endowed Scholarship. This is a merit and need based scholarship for students, with priority given to students from underrepresented populations. Dr. Lopez was also the keynote speaker at the summer closing ceremonies on July 22, 2011 (see story on page 14).

A Returning Face...



Former Aetna HPPI Academy Student Now a UConn Student

The Aetna HPPI Academy welcomed one of their own back during the academy's closing ceremony. Faith Crittenden, an Aetna HPPI Academy graduate who is now enrolled at the

University of Connecticut, took a break from college life to deliver a message of hope and encouragement to the students. Crittenden is a Connecticut native who graduated from Metropolitan Learning Center in Bloomfield. While in high school, she earned several awards and certifications including, Red Cross certified life guard and three varsity letters in swimming. She was the president of the Metropolitan Learning Center National Honor Society, served as an in-school ambassador for exchange students, and served on the student leadership committee. She also managed to find enough time in her busy schedule to volunteer, assisting the school medical official to broaden her own understanding of the medical field. Crittenden received honors of distinction while at Metropolitan Learning Center. She was a National AP Scholar, a Capitol Scholars Award recipient, and her biggest honor, a 2010 Gates Millennium Scholarship award recipient. She enjoys playing jazz and classical flute, is an avid reader, and loves to knit and crochet.

Crittenden received acceptance letters from Quinnipiac University and the University of Hartford to name a few but she followed her heart and decided to attend the University of Connecticut where she is majoring in Chemistry with a minor in Molecular and Cell Biology.

2011 Award Recipients

John and Valerie Rowe Scholarship

Each year, the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs provides scholarships in the form of book awards to students from the Aetna HPPI Academy who will enroll as freshmen at the University of Connecticut. The 2011 John and Valerie Rowe book awards recipients were announced at the May 5 closing ceremony of the Aetna HPPI Academy. They are John Garcia and Jarrett Headley. Both recipients participated in numerous high school programs sponsored by the Health Careers Opportunity Programs.

Friends of the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs Scholarship Fund



In honor of Dr. Boake Plessy's contributions, the UConn Health Center has established a scholarship fund that will be used to support educational enhancement for students who participated in Aetna HPPI Academy and are planning to continue their education at the post-secondary level. The Friends of the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs Scholarship was awarded to William Pawshuk on May 4, 2011 at the Academic Year Recognition Closing Ceremony.

To contribute to these funds, or for more information about philanthropy to support the Health Center, please call Dina Plapler, Vice President for Development, at 860-679-1122.

Community Award Recipients

The HCOP department is also proud of two of our own, Dajee Addison and Mubera Becirovic, who are recipients of The Jacob L. and Lewis Fox Foundation Scholarship. Congratulations to both of them for this well-deserved award.

In the Spotlight...

Ms. Caryn Baseler

Sport and Medical Sciences Academy
Biology Teacher



Every student has at least one teacher in their daily life who influences them and the students of the Sport and Medical Sciences Academy (SMSA) are no exception. Biology teacher Caryn Baseler continues to build brighter

futures for her students.

Baseler, who serves as the Science Academic Team Leader and Freshman Team Leader, joined the SMSA team in 2008, the same year the HCOP Programs transferred to SMSA. She has been involved with the HCOP Department through the 9th and 10th grade College Science Partnership Program. She credits the HCOP Department for a number of her students' achievements, such as improvement in their lab and research skills. According to Baseler, the school's science CAPT scores have steadily been improving as a result of student participation in the HCOP program. A number of her students have received awards to assist them with college as well. Baseler feels proud when the students are participating. She said that she can see the spark igniting, creating excitement and interest among the students.

For her outstanding service to the Aetna HPPI Programs as well as at her school, Baseler received the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs Recognition Award during the program's 2011 Aetna HPPI Closing Ceremony. Baseler shares this honor with Dr. Joshua Beebe who also received recognition for his outstanding contribution to the Aetna HPPI and the students of SMSA.

Enrichment Programs...

Great Explorations



The Great Explorations Program is an after-school program designed to provide extracurricular activities in math, science, and language arts to 7th and 8th grade middle school students.

Students participating in the Great Explorations Program are currently enrolled in one of six Hartford public middle schools, Bellizzi, Greater Hartford Academy of Mathematics and Science, Jumoke Academy, Kennelly, Naylor, and Sport and Medical Sciences Academy. Great Explorations offers a four-week summer academic enrichment program for approximately 35 rising 7th and 8th grade participants. The program is held at the Greater Hartford Academy of Mathematics and Science. Students receive instruction in math, science, and language arts. The Great Explorations Program targets any racially ethnic group.

Aetna HPPI Academy



The Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative Academy (Aetna HPPI Academy) is designed to provide educational opportunities

which may not be available to a number of Connecticut high school students. The purpose of the Aetna HPPI Academy is to provide access and preparation to students interested in health professions who come from backgrounds where they are the first in their family to earn a four-year degree, come from modest family means, and/or are from backgrounds traditionally underrepresented in healthcare. Students participating in the Aetna HPPI Academy are generally recruited from the Hartford area schools and have chosen to pursue careers in the health professions. The Aetna HPPI Academy students aspire to become doctors, dentists, bio-medical research scientists, pharmacists, and/or nurses.

