Greetings from Happy Valley! What a historic time this is to be teaching, learning, or working in health care. Health care reform envisions many changes and challenges, and I hope we can partner with you to be part of the solutions that must emerge.

HPA is focused on our mission: “Developing leaders and knowledge to improve health and health care.” We are now two years into our current strategic plan, and we’ve made significant progress in many areas. We’ve completely revised our doctoral and M.H.A. programs to accomplish that mission, and the early results from that are very positive. We’ve been working hard to develop research partnerships in academia and in health care, and we now average approximately $5 million of research funding annually (about a four-fold increase from the beginning of the decade).

Much of our progress has come through the support of alumni. Our Affiliate Program Group (APG) is one of the most active in the University, with a large mentoring program, two professional development events for students, several annual social/professional events for alumni, a regular program of alumni awards, and more. I am thankful to Steve Wagman ’82 and all the individuals involved in the APG and its programs for all that they do for HPA, its students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

So, what’s next? As Joe Paterno says, “If you’re not getting better, you’re getting worse.” We’ll be continuing to assess and improve our graduate programs. We need to expand our recruiting of top-quality graduate students, so tell your colleagues about the benefits of Penn State and HPA. Send them to our website and have them apply (or apply yourself—Happy Valley is still beautiful).

We’ll be continuing to grow our existing partnerships and developing new ones. I strongly believe that the best research and education in our field comes through the combination of academics and practice. The ideas of our faculty and students need to confront the reality health care leaders and organizations face daily. That rapid feedback enhances our ability to develop leaders and knowledge.

Finally, we will be starting a deep assessment of the central part of our educational mission, the undergraduate program. This is something I’ve wanted to do for more than a decade. While we still get feedback from students, preceptors, and employers about the outstanding quality of the program and its graduates, I think we can bring some fresh ideas on board to improve. We need to create the undergraduate program in Health Policy and Administration for the twenty-first century. We need speak to a generation where the aging of the baby boom is not the future, but the reality of today. We need to engage a student who tweets and bbms. We need to incorporate IT, sustainability, accountability, consumerism, and privacy in our courses.

And, for all of these efforts, we’ll keep looking for your help. We found mentors for thirty students last year. I want fifty students mentored. We have 250 alumni on a LinkedIn group sharing their expertise. I want 500 alumni there. I am so grateful to faculty like Stan Meyers and Marshall Raffel for helping me meet many of you. I want to help you engage with the great students and faculty that make my work so rewarding.

Join the fun and share your ideas by sending me an e-mail at dshea@psu.edu. Or call me at 814-863-2901. Better yet, find me on Facebook and LinkedIn. I can’t wait to hear from you.

Regards,

Dennis Shea
Professor and Head
To make this effort successful, we need to strong Penn State HPA connections. One additional way to take advantage of our (or pending graduates) seeking positions. Communicating this information. It's intend to take place of Penn State's Career Services or other means of communicating this information. It's intended to give alumni who have positions to fill the opportunity to connect with other alumni (or pending graduates) seeking positions. Given today's challenging job market, it's one additional way to take advantage of our strong Penn State HPA connections. To make this effort successful, we need to hear about opportunities in your company.

With this in mind, we launched a new career opportunities page on the HPA APG website. This page contains information on current employment opportunities that the APG and/or HPA department receive from employers or HPA alumni directly. This is not intended to take the place of Penn State's Career Services or other means of communicating this information. It's intended to give alumni who have positions to fill the opportunity to connect with other alumni (or pending graduates) seeking positions. Given today's challenging job market, it's one additional way to take advantage of our strong Penn State HPA connections.

We will keep the process simple. Notification of an open position would consist of a simple e-mail with the following information:

- Position title
- Business line
- Job location
- Job status – full-time/part-time (or hours)
- Job description
- Qualifications/experience
- Benefits information (optional)
- Travel – percentage, if applicable
- Link to company website
- How to apply
- Contact information

A job posting would remain active for sixty days, unless we hear from the originator that the position has been filled.

For more information, visit the HPA APG website (www.hhdev.psu.edu/alumni/apg/hpa) and click on “Career Opportunities.”

Networking Events

The HPA APG Social/Networking Committee has been busy working its way across the Keystone State in 2010. The committee co-sponsored a spring event with the Healthcare Leadership Network of the Delaware Valley (HLNDV) in Philadelphia. The event was held at the Melting Pot in Center City and was well attended. The evening provided time for HLNDV and Penn State alumni to get to know each other over cheese and chocolate fondue. Two guest speakers provided insightful presentations on how to make connections using both traditional and e-networking methods. The committee is also planning a late fall event to be held in Pittsburgh.

Thank you for your support during my first year as your president. Your feedback and ideas are always welcome and you can reach me at steven.wagman@siemens.com.
Dionisio Welcomes Opportunity to Work in M.H.A. Program

Joseph Dionisio has joined the department as professor of practice and director of external relations and master of health administration (M.H.A.) professional development. He comes to Penn State after spending more than thirty-five years in health care financial management.

Dionisio worked for twenty years with Price Waterhouse (now PricewaterhouseCoopers), including eight years as partner. He held leadership roles in several health care organizations, including senior vice president and chief financial officer for the Allegheny Health System in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and founding principal of Transition Management Group in Pittsburgh.

Prior to coming to Penn State, he was president and CEO of New England Baptist Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts, for seven years.

"Joe is an accomplished health services executive," says Dr. Dennis Shea, professor and head of the department. "I have great confidence that he will be able to maintain and grow the momentum we have been developing in building external relationships, organizing co-curricular activities, and providing an outstanding education to students in health policy and health administration."

"I am delighted to have the opportunity to join the HPA and M.H.A. programs after years in key health care administrative roles," says Dionisio. "I trust my experience will help bring textbooks and other learning methods alive."

At Penn State, Dionisio will serve several roles. As director of external relations and M.H.A. professional development, he will serve as liaison to the M.H.A. program’s board of visitors, the HPA Affiliate Program Group, and the college’s development office. Additionally, he will be involved in various activities involving M.H.A. students, including residencies, postgraduate fellowships, outreach activities, and student recruitment. As professor of practice, Dionisio will teach several classes on health systems administration and health care financing.

Join the HPA APG Today

You may be asking yourself, "What is an APG?" An Affiliate Program Group (APG) consists of alumni or friends of Penn State who have a common interest in a particular academic, professional, or extracurricular activity that is related to a specific college or campus program. APGs are chartered by their college or campus alumni society.

The HPA APG was formed in 1996 and is the third oldest within the College of Health and Human Development. All persons who have graduated from the HPA program (or its predecessors) shall automatically be admitted as "alumni members" with full membership privileges. In a time when everything has an escalating cost, your APG membership is free!

We encourage everyone to become involved in the APG in some way; but first, it would be nice to get reacquainted with you. Please go to our website to register with the APG: www.hhdev.psu.edu/alumni/apg/hpa/tellnews.html. While you are there, you can browse the site, meet your APG board, and see what your APG has been up to.

Clark Eager to Contribute to HPA Teaching/Research

Dr. Jonathan Clark has joined the department as assistant professor and he is teaching HPA 503, Understanding Organizational Behavior, this fall. His teaching and research interests center on strategy, innovation, and organizational design in the hospital industry.

Clark earned his Ph.D. in health policy (management track) in May 2010 from Harvard University, where his research focused on organizational scope in the hospital industry. He also holds a master’s degree in health policy and management from Harvard University and a bachelor’s degree in economics from Boston College.
HPA Interns Earn High Praise

The 2010 HPA internship program saw another successful and productive summer, with 134 students completing a wide variety of work experiences. The majority of students worked in acute care settings in Pennsylvania and surrounding states. Two of the many stand-out opportunities for students include internships at Virtua Healthcare System in Voorhees, New Jersey, and at Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh.

At Virtua, intern Kevin Lacatena played an integral role in contributing to the opening of a new hospital. Serving on one of the project teams, Lacatena was tasked with designing fire, evacuation, and surge plans for the new facility. The project involved mapping all departments; establishing rapid response routes; and producing templates that identify shut-offs, fire extinguishers, and emergency pull stations. “During this internship, I was able to see myself transform into a young professional, as well as develop the social and technical skills needed to survive in the health care field,” Lacatena said.

At Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh, intern Shawn Dilmore completed a project to implement Internet technology to improve patient communications and administrative tasks, while concurrently preparing the facility for additional Internet-based health care management tools. “This project provided me with an excellent experience to work with many different disciplines within the information technology and clinical realms,” Dilmore reflected.

Through their internships, all students had the opportunity to hone their interpersonal skills and contribute to administrative projects and organizational goals, all of which provided them with marketable and valuable hands-on skills. In turn, the internship sites benefited from the services, skills, and fresh perspectives offered by the interns.

In their overall ratings of HPA interns, nearly 96 percent of internship preceptors ranked students as “good” or “excellent,” with 79 percent of these students falling into the “excellent” category. The HPA department is actively seeking alumni to host internships for students. Anyone interested should contact Richard Shurgalla, director of undergraduate professional development, at rns12@psu.edu.

Faculty Members Lauded for Outstanding Service

Several HPA faculty members were recently honored with awards.

Dr. Diane Brannon, professor, was selected as the recipient of the 2010 Excellence in Teaching Award by the Health Care Management Division of the Academy of Management. This annual teaching award recognizes an educator who has shown innovation in teaching and has successfully mentored many students over the years.

In support of honoring Brannon with the Excellence in Teaching Award, Amy Stott ’09g HPA, a postdoctoral student who worked closely with Brannon, said, “Dr. Brannon is a dynamic and powerful teacher who makes complex findings understandable. She loves sharing her expertise with students and colleagues. In many areas, both personally and professionally, Dr. Brannon taught and encouraged me to meet challenges that I thought were impossible.”

“That my former students and colleagues value our work together enough to make this effort on my behalf is a rare and precious acknowledgment,” Brannon said.

Dr. Rhonda BeLue, assistant professor, is the recipient of the College of Health and Human Development’s Diversity Achievement Award, which recognizes a faculty or staff member or student in the college who demonstrates commitment to the value of diversity and has been instrumental in creating or facilitating a climate of inclusiveness in the college. BeLue received a plaque recognizing her contribution and a cash award. “I am honored to receive this award,” said BeLue. “The opportunity to teach and mentor students from all backgrounds, as well as to learn from them, has been a rewarding experience. Thank you to all of my colleagues and students who nominated me.”

Dr. Marianne Hillemeier, associate professor, has been selected as the 2010 recipient of the college’s Fran and Holly Soistman Faculty Development Award, which recognizes significant and innovative research related to the design, development, delivery, administration, or evaluation of health care services. For the honor, Hillemeier received a plaque and a stipend. Hillemeier’s research focuses on health promotion and health services for children in vulnerable populations, as well as reproductive-aged women in at-risk populations experiencing adverse birth outcomes.

Dr. Jonathan Clark, assistant professor, received an Outstanding Reviewer Award for the Health Care Management Division at the 2010 Academy of Management meeting. The honor is determined by evaluations of the program chair and the rankings of paper authors. Only the top 5 to 10 percent of the reviewers receive this award.

Dr. Rhonda BeLue

Student Kevin Lacatena stands at a construction site for a new hospital. Lacatena designed evacuation routes for the hospital as part of his internship.
Ph.D. Students Set to Study Breast Cancer Disparities in Appalachian Region

Ph.D. students Chris Louis, Katelyn Holmes, and Nengliang Yao will join Penn State researchers studying breast cancer disparities in rural Appalachia. Funded through a two-year training grant from the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, the students will work with Dr. Marianne Hillemeier, associate professor; Dr. Roger Anderson, professor of public health sciences at Penn State College of Medicine and co-principal investigator of the grant; and Dr. Eugene Lengerich, professor of public health sciences in the College of Medicine and principal investigator of the Northern Appalachia Cancer Network.

The researchers note that breast cancer is of particular interest in Appalachia because it is the most prevalent cancer among women and has a good prognosis when treated with guideline-recommended care. However, the disease shows disparities in outcomes compared with other regions of the country. Specifically, the Appalachian region experiences a high rate of premature mortality due to breast cancer. Once ranked forty-second for breast cancer mortality rates in the United States, the Appalachian region is currently ranked second, according to the National Cancer Institute.

A key component of the training program is a community-based internship with the Appalachia Community Cancer Network (ACCN), a research initiative funded by the National Cancer Institute. In this internship, students will be able to see firsthand the effects of breast cancer disparities in the region.

“I’m very excited to be joining the Susan G. Komen training grant,” says Louis. “As we’ll focus mainly on breast cancer disparities in rural Appalachia, the grant allows us to learn from some of the top cancer researchers in the country and do a hands-on internship that fits with our personal research interests. Research in this area can make a real difference and hopefully improve the lives of people in this region.”

The researchers believe increased breast cancer mortality rates are due in large part to barriers to optimal screening and management due to a lack of regular access to primary care and to comprehensive oncology services. The proposed study involves lead investigators mentoring and supporting student trainees in their projects, which are aimed at describing and understanding these disparities in rural Appalachia.

As part of the training study, students will determine how many women in the area do not receive care that is concordant with National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) guidelines, identify characteristics of cancer treatment facilities that might affect the provision of guideline-concordant care, and seek to understand the role of community attitudes and awareness of cancer prevention in screening practices.

According to Hillemeier and Anderson, the study will allow students to “build a solid evidence base from which to develop effective breast cancer prevention, control, and treatment strategies that can lead to reduction in breast cancer disparities.”

HPA Students Participate in Global Leadership Initiative

HPA students Alison Lambert and Heather Bartusek are among a group of undergraduate students in the College of Health and Human Development and the School of Nursing participating in the recently established Global Leadership Initiative (GLI).

Modeled after the college’s successful Women’s Leadership Initiative, GLI was designed to prepare a select group of academically talented and highly motivated students for future leadership in areas related to global health and human development. It was designed to allow students to build their global awareness and prepare them for working with people worldwide through experiences abroad, in-class learning, communicating with an alumni mentor, and sharing experiences with other students.

“I was so excited to hear I had been nominated for the GLI because I feel that I can get involved in international help right here at Penn State,” Lambert says. “I have been interested in volunteer work ever since I went to the Dominican Republic three years ago and stayed in a poverty-stricken town. The house I stayed in did not even have a bathroom. It is amazing for me to see how lucky we really are here in the United States, and I would like to take advantage of any opportunity to give back to an impoverished nation.”

Bartusek says, “As a member of the inaugural class of the Global Leadership Initiative, I am looking forward to sharing my passion for global health and other issues with other Penn State students. The group has a plethora of topics that we’re interested in researching and learning about as the semester goes on.”

Stay Connected through Facebook and LinkedIn

Find fellow alumni online by searching for the following groups:

Facebook
Penn State University Health Policy and Administration
Penn State MHAs

LinkedIn
Penn State HPA Alumni
Penn State University MHA
On-the-Job Injuries Hurt Home Health Care Industry

Penn State researchers have found that training can alleviate some of the problems occupational injuries have caused to the long-term care industry. The study, which was presented at the Academy of Management Annual Meeting in August 2010 and was published in the 2010 Academy of Management Annual Meeting Best Paper Proceedings, looked at the effect of injuries among home health aides.

“In our research, we saw a cascading effect,” says Dr. Deirdre McCaughey, assistant professor and first author on the paper. “Employees who had no workplace training or did not believe their training prepared them well had more injuries. They were also much less likely than non-injured employees to recommend their organization as a place to work or seek care services.”

The researchers analyzed data from the nationally representative 2007 National Home Health Aide Survey, which was funded by the United States Department of Health and Human Services and conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“Employees who received training had lower injury rates,” says McCaughey. “What this suggests is that investing finances into ‘soft resources’ can have tangible benefits to organizations. Organizations tend to cut back on spending on soft resources, especially during hard economic times, because there is usually no easily measured benefit.” Cutting back on home health aides’ training increases employees’ injury risks and turnover intentions, both of which will likely incur more costs over the long run.

Because employee training resulted in fewer injuries and decreased turnover rates, the workforce remained more consistent. McCaughey worked as a physical therapist prior to her research role, and she had the chance to see how much people depend on a familiar face in health care, especially when a person is suffering from poor memory and confusion. Continual new faces in the continuum of care only add to the confusion.

The researchers also found that employee perceptions of the workplace and employee training could affect the likelihood of injuries. Employees who felt that their training had not prepared them well were three times more likely to be injured than employees who felt their training prepared them well. Similarly, employees who felt that they had poor supervisor support were at higher risk for injuries—one and a half times more likely to have one injury and three times more likely to have three injuries, compared to those who felt they had supportive supervisors.

Employees who felt that their training prepared them well for their daily job duties had lower injury rates and were more likely to rate their organization highly, both as a place to work and from which to seek services.

McCaughey and her colleagues are expanding their injury research, now looking at nursing aides. Other authors on the paper include Dr. Diane Brannon, professor of health policy and administration; Dr. Rita Jablonski, assistant professor of nursing; Gwen McGhan, project administrator in the John A. Hartford Center of Geriatric Nursing Excellence in Pennsylvania State’s School of Nursing; and Jungyoon Kim, HPA Ph.D. student.

This research was funded by Penn State’s Social Science Research Institute.

Recent Funding Supports Pennsylvania Office of Rural Health Efforts

The Pennsylvania Office of Rural Health (PORH) recently secured $1,436,922 in funding to support its programs over the next several years. The funds will enable PORH to continue addressing rural health and agricultural health and safety issues in Pennsylvania and strive to improve the health and well-being of Pennsylvania’s rural citizens. Those awards include:

- A one-year, $180,000 grant from the federal Office of Rural Health Policy (ORHP) through its State Office of Rural Health Program, which was bolstered by a three-year, $300,000 matching grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Health’s Bureau of Health Planning.
- A one-year, $400,209 award from the Pennsylvania Department of Health’s Bureau of Health Planning to administer the Commonwealth’s federally funded Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Program. The program, which is funded by ORHP, enables states to designate very small (twenty-five beds or fewer), very rural hospitals as Critical Access Hospitals and to assist those hospitals in quality improvement, health information technology, staff development, and continued financial viability.
- A one-year, $175,100 grant from ORHP to oversee Pennsylvania’s Small Rural Hospital Improvement Program. This program helps small rural hospitals (forty-nine beds or fewer) comply with provisions of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), reduce medical errors, and support quality improvement efforts.
- A two-year, $381,613 grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture’s Bureau of Plant Industries to administer Pennsylvania’s Rural Health Farm Worker Protection Safety Program. The program, the only one of its kind in the nation, provides technical and compliance assistance to farm owners, growers, and farm workers who are required to comply with the Environmental Protection Agency’s Worker Protection Standards related to the safe use of pesticides in agricultural production.

PORH, located administratively in the HPA department, is one of fifty state offices of rural health in the nation and is charged with being a source of coordination, technical assistance, networking, and partnership development in the state on all issues that affect health care in rural areas of the state. For more information, please contact PORH’s director, Lisa Davis, at 814-863-8214 or lad3@psu.edu or visit www.porh.psu.edu.
Student’s Late Husband Honored by U.S. Air Force Squadron

First Lieutenant Joshua Shepherd ’05 JOURN suffered fatal injuries in a 2008 crash of his B-52 aircraft during a training mission after being deployed from Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana to the Andersen Air Force Base in Guam.

This past summer, the fallen navigator was honored by the 112th Air Operations Squadron in State College. Lt. Shepherd’s 2008 mission was part of the Pacific Theater Support Package.

His wife, Meredith Shepherd, an HPA senior, and their two sons, Noah and Evan, attended the July 17 dedication of the facility’s Operations Floor and a twenty-seven-by-twenty-two-foot mural, both of which bear Lt. Shepherd’s name. Shepherd says she is proud to see her husband’s dedication to his country being honored.

“It is very special to see him honored, but we can never forget the five other men killed during the fatal crash. We honor all of the men and women who gave the ultimate sacrifice for their country,” she says.

Shepherd worked as a nurse in Texas and Louisiana from 2006 until her husband’s death. She and her sons then returned to her and her husband’s hometown in Mifflin County, Pennsylvania. She enrolled in the HPA undergraduate program in 2009 and plans to join Penn State’s Master of Health Administration program this spring.

A scholarship has been set up in Lt. Shepherd’s name through the Penn State Air Force Reserve Officers’ Training Corps. This scholarship is given yearly to an outstanding junior cadet pursuing a commission in the aviation career field. Donations can be made to Penn State Air Force ROTC, Wagner Building, University Park, PA 16802 with Lt. Shepherd’s name in the note line.

HPA Partner in Health Care Delivery Research Center

The department is a partner in the newly established Center for Integrated Healthcare Delivery Systems (CIHDS), which strives to capitalize on the existing strengths of Penn State and promote a holistic approach to understanding and solving problems of access and quality in health care. The founding industry partners are Siemens Medical Solutions, Lockheed Martin, and several health care provider organizations. Steve Wagnman ’82 HPA, VP and practice director of Solutions Implementation at Siemens, was instrumental in developing the partnership.

One recent CIHDS initiative, for which HPA professor and CIHDS co-founder Dr. Diane Brannon is coordinating the evaluation process, joins the colleges of Engineering and Health and Human Development and Penn State Outreach. This effort involves Toyota Production System’s “Lean Manufacturing,” which is a training process to improve safety and efficiency. Another recent CIHDS project targeted improvements to Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center’s emergency room.

This initiative involved Industrial Engineering faculty and students from Penn State College of Medicine whose work included the introduction of an accelerated, physician-led triage system, resulting in improved patient flow and reduced wait times.

Brannon’s involvement with the center stems from her teaching and research interests in quality improvement methods. She adds that collaborating with Penn State engineers is another plus because health care can benefit from engineering-fueled improvements. For example, CIHDS is currently working to become part of the Center for Healthcare Organization Transformation, a National Science Foundation-funded industry/university research collaboration on health care improvements. According to Brannon, the engineering industry’s shift from manufacturing solutions to service solutions is “ripe with opportunities” to improve the delivery of health care.

According to its leaders, CIHDS aims to create a new medical model that is safe, effective, patient-centered, timely, efficient, and equitable—“the six quality aims envisioned in the landmark Institute of Medicine (IOM) report, Crossing the Quality Chasm.” CIHDS’s interdisciplinary team is dedicated to developing and applying system principles to achieve this model.

AcademyHealth Student Chapter Visits Hershey Medical Center

Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center and the HPA department share a connection in research and education in health services research. Accordingly, the department’s AcademyHealth Student Chapter recently made its first trip to Hershey. Seven AcademyHealth Student Chapter members toured Penn State Hershey Medical Center’s simulation laboratories, children’s hospital, cancer institute, and rehabilitation clinic. Students also attended the Hershey Health Services Research Colloquium, which featured talks on outcomes related to transporting stroke patients and correlations between hospital size and mental health outcomes. Students who took part in the trip were Katelyn Holmes, Namrata Uberoi (president), Chris Louis, Jillian Harvey (vice president), Jennifer O’Hora (secretary), Jungyoon Kim, and Nengliang Yao (treasurer), all HPA doctoral students.

In other AcademyHealth Student Chapter news, members recently hosted their first alumni colloquium speaker, Dr. Nicholas Castle ’95g H P A. He presented a paper, “Resident Abuse in Nursing Homes,” and met with students and faculty to discuss his research and share his experiences as an academic in health services research. Castle is a professor in the Department of Health Policy and Management at the University of Pittsburgh. His research interests include long-term care, nursing home quality, top management, and staff turnover.
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

December 18
Fall Commencement Reception
10:00-11:30 a.m.
Findlay Commons, East Halls

February 26
HPA Mentoring Program*
Workshop and Dinner
The Nittany Lion Inn
Additional events on February 25 and 26 TBD

March 25-26
College of Health and Human Development Alumni Board Meeting

*SUPPORTING THE DEPARTMENT

Gifts to the department help students pursue a high-quality education or help faculty conduct cutting-edge research. For more information regarding philanthropic opportunities within the Department of Health Policy and Administration, please contact:

Maggie Crispell
Director of Development
814-865-1064
mac1@psu.edu