2021

We are ending a historic year at the Yale School of Public Health and I want to share with our friends, colleagues and partners a small sample of the highlights from 2021.

As we emerged from the pandemic, student evaluations of faculty teaching have never been better. The school launched its online Executive MPH program, drawing talented individuals from near and far for a virtual education that will bolster the ranks of public health professionals. Our research was groundbreaking this year on many fronts and our students and alumni continue to make vital contributions. In the area of diversity, we have new faculty who will bolster our research in the critical area of health equity for all. The list of accomplishments is long and was achieved through an ethos of dedication and commitment that pervades our school. Examples here cannot capture the full breadth of faculty contributions!

I wish you all happy and healthy holidays and look forward to future collaborations and progress toward our shared vision of better health outcomes for all.

Warmly,

Sten H. Vermund, M.D., Ph.D.
Dean, Yale School of Public Health
TOP RESEARCH

YSPH research examining the use of saliva to test for COVID-19, estimating the excess deaths caused by the pandemic, developing a fresh air wristband to measure air pollution levels and air pollution exposure, studying smoking to cope with mental distress and investigating physician participation in Medicaid were recognized by the school this year for excellence. The school, meanwhile, received more than $60 million in total research awards in fiscal year 2021.

AN ONLINE MPH

The online Executive MPH – created to meet the needs of accomplished, working professionals – launched this summer with over three dozen students seeking the latest training in leadership and management, a broad foundation and specialized knowledge in areas critical to public health. A $10,000 scholarship for every student was named in honor of Irene Trowell-Harris, an accomplished alumna and strong advocate for education.

BHUTAN’S SUCCESS

Alumna Dechen Wangmo, M.P.H. ’07 (left), a native of Bhutan and now the country’s health minister, helped lead the Himalayan nation through the COVID-19 pandemic with astonishing success. Bhutan’s death count from the pandemic was incredibly low – one – as of summer. Her work was noticed by the World Health Assembly, which elected Wangmo as its president in May. She was also recognized with the school’s Distinguished Alumni Award.
YSPH WELCOMES DR. FAUCI

Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and perhaps the most recognizable face of the COVID-19 pandemic response, paid a virtual visit to campus in May to address the 2021 graduating class. In his livestreamed keynote, he urged graduates to use their new skills to seize opportunities and make a difference.

ADVISING THE PRESIDENT

As the chair of President Biden’s COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force, Marcella Nunez-Smith, M.D., MHS ’06, a professor at the Yale schools of medicine and public health, has been working throughout 2021 to address racial disparities in who gets vaccinated and when. More recently, Nunez-Smith was elected to the National Academy of Medicine for her important contributions.

INNOVATION

Throughout 2021, SalivaDirect, a noninvasive method developed at the Yale School of Public Health to test for COVID-19 infection, expanded to 147 lab sites in 39 states and six countries, and over 2.5 million tests have been administered to date in the United States. Later in the year, the Food and Drug Administration authorized the test to be used with pooled saliva samples, a measure that will save time, money and resources.
NEW EXPERTISE IN EQUITY
Ijeoma Opara, Ph.D., M.P.H. (left), researches how systemic racism influences substance use and sexual health among Black and Latinx youth. Chelsey Carter, Ph.D. (right), will bring extensive research experience in the intersection of race, class, gender and chronic disease when she starts in 2022. Both are with the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences. Meanwhile, a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Fund was created at YSPH with a gift from Dean Sten H. Vermund and his wife, Dr. Pilar Vargas.

MILESTONES FOR STUDENTS
For the 2021–22 school year, YSPH increased the amount of financial aid that it gives students to the highest level ever, and its yield (the number of students who accept) increased by 12%. The incoming class is also the most diverse in the school’s history: 29% are international and 52% of domestic students are from diverse backgrounds.

GREAT YEAR FOR DEVELOPMENT
A number of gifts expanded diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging initiatives, created a Rapid Response Fund for COVID-19 research and funded an endowed chair (the Raj and Indra Nooyi Professor of Public Health, presented to Albert Ko, right, with the Nooyis). Meanwhile, Robert Shiller, Sterling Professor of Economics, and Virginia Shiller supported the Office of Public Health Practice Health Equity Fellowships, which will provide stipends for M.P.H. students working in the field of maternal child health and attachment.