

dean's message

CLIMATE CHANGE has become part of the global vernacular. People take pride in driving alternative fuel vehicles, and corporations think it's good PR to have lower "carbon footprints."



Al Gore's well-earned Nobel Prize is just the latest reminder that environmentalism has gone mainstream. He began talking about climate change long before it had a name and decades before many were convinced it was real. By now, we all know climate change is happening, but the consequences for public health and health research, which are significant, remain largely unappreciated.

According to the World Health Organization, this shift in climate is already responsible for more than 150,000 deaths and millions of illnesses each year, mostly due to a wide array of causes from malnutrition to diarrhea to malaria. Malaria, for example, is responsible for 1-2 million deaths each year, most of them among children. The mosquitoes that carry the disease, as well as the ticks and fleas that spread other infections, are sensitive to small changes in temperature and humidity. As a result of recent temperature increases, mosquitoes have expanded their range from the tropics to higher elevations. Malaria is now found in the mountains of Ethiopia and in Nairobi, Kenya – high-altitude regions that once were malaria-free. In addition, dengue fever is thriving and heading to less tropical grounds. So far this year nearly 650,000 cases of the disease have been reported across Latin America and the Caribbean. That's 11 percent more than in all of 2006.

It is my hope that the Nobel win for Al Gore (not long ago an esteemed visiting scholar at our school) will help put public health squarely in the middle of the climate change debate. To that end, the School of Public Health recently hosted the first-of-its-kind summit on the health effects of climate change. We convened many of the top thinkers and researchers in the world to help us begin a dialogue about threats and decisive actions necessary to begin to address this burgeoning problem. Our cover story (see page 4) takes a deeper look at the issues involved, and the summit, broadcast live via Webcast, is available for viewing at www.ph.ucla.edu/climatechange.

As we learned from our panelists, climate change is another of those issues with an unparalleled impact on poorer, underserved communities. The School of Public Health has made eliminating such differences a top priority by creating the Center to Eliminate Health Disparities, which was recently awarded a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention grant and designated a National

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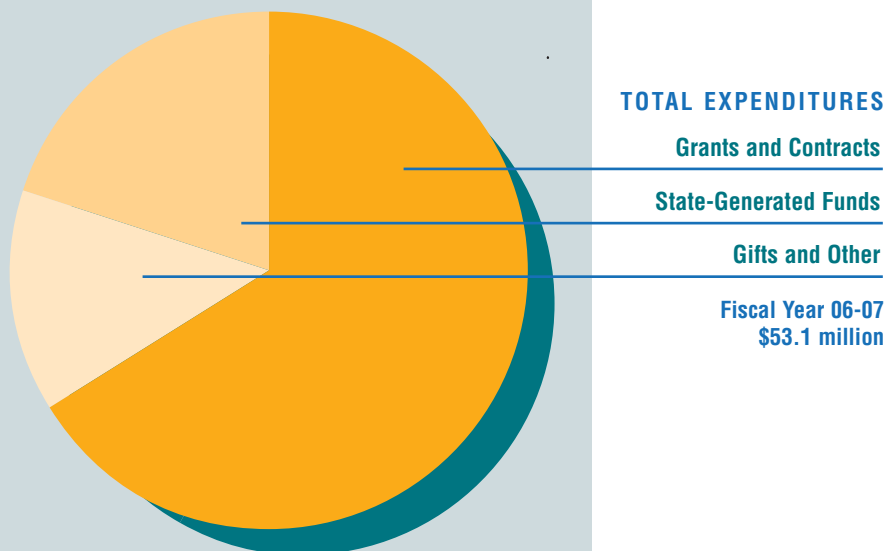
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Center of Excellence in the Elimination of Health Disparities (see page 30). Through this award, we will expand our ongoing work to address health disparities related to heart disease, stroke and cancer among African Americans, Latinos and Asians at the local, state and national levels.

On the eve of many presidential primaries, it is encouraging to see the amount of attention and thought spent on meaningful health care reform. After witnessing the debacle of the 1994 attempt, most believed another generation would pass before anyone dared to try again. And yet, virtually all of the candidates have some version of what they label health care reform. So what will it take? A feature beginning on page 12 of this issue looks at what our faculty are doing to influence future policy. With California leading the way, and the presidential candidates following suit, we may just find the answer.

The underlying theme of this issue, of all of public health really, is that there are problems and there is hope. If individuals create change in their lives and demand the same on a larger scale from their state and national elected officials, I believe meaningful reform can and will happen.

Linda Rosenstock, M.D., M.P.H.
Dean



TOTAL EXPENDITURES

Grants and Contracts

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\$53.1 million**