

dean's message

AS THE NATION STRUGGLES to cope with a severe economic crisis, the headlines on the cover of this issue are, unfortunately, all too familiar. In California, the situation is even bleaker. Following the recent failure of several funding propositions on the May 19 ballot, the state's coffers are perilously low

and, facing a \$24 billion shortfall, no program is immune from cuts. Deep and potentially debilitating cuts are being considered in, among others, Healthy Families, the state's low-cost health insurance program for children; mental health services and children's welfare programs; and, closer to home for our school, support for students and for the UC system overall, further reducing state support for the campuses. At last writing of this message we anticipated the school would suffer a cut of approximately 4 percent this year. We now know it will be more than twice that amount.

Regardless of where you stand, the current financial crisis has a long reach and is wreaking havoc on the health of our communities. Our cover story (see page 12) takes a closer look at the impact a recession has on public health. Rising levels of unemployment result in an increase in the number of people without health insurance or who are underinsured. More people suffer from depression and there is an uptick in substance abuse. With deals like two burgers for \$2 at the local fast-food chain, people are tempted by poor dietary choices – and increasingly are making them. The long-term health implications of a poor economy remain to be seen, but this should be of great concern to us in public health.

As we grapple with these issues, other public health challenges don't recede. As if we needed to be reminded, the H1N1 (swine flu) virus generated headlines of its own this spring. While relatively mild in its initial outbreak, the scare of a potential pandemic swiftly brought public health issues front and center. When biological and infectious disease outbreaks occur, whether natural or from bioterror events, public health officials need to make rapid and critically important decisions in order to save lives. Current response capabilities in the United States are not fully equipped to provide such timely information, as was confirmed by the variable and sometimes sluggish response to H1N1. I am pleased to report that the Global Bio Lab at UCLA, a laboratory capable of quickly analyzing and processing large quantities of biological samples, is



nearing completion. The Global Bio Lab will be poised to act as a first line of defense against the deadliest biological threats around the globe. In addition to the research and response capacity, the lab will serve as a cutting-edge classroom for our very talented students.

Amid these myriad and mounting challenges, our work as a school is more important than ever. We continue to grow our faculty in ways that will prepare our students to address the changing field of public health. Several years ago our strategic plan addressed the need to create a program in global health. We have met that goal and then some, with our expanding and innovative global health program. This issue includes two articles focusing on international public health activities undertaken by our faculty and students, including a look at the newest additions to our impressive group of global health-oriented faculty (see the articles on pages 6 and 18).

As we face our own difficult challenges in these tough economic times, we do so knowing several important things. Our students are among the best and brightest, our faculty is world-class, and our alumni and friends are among the most generous. Efforts to recruit top-notch students remain a high priority; we look to all of you to help us ensure that if a talented student wishes to pursue a career in public health, we make it a reality.



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

SAVE THE DATE

UCLA SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH
ALUMNI AND FRIENDS RECEPTION

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2009

6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

Philadelphia Marriott, Room: Franklin 6

During the Annual Meeting of
the American Public Health Association,
November 7-11, in Philadelphia

*Check the APHA schedule or stop by the UCLA
School of Public Health booth for location information.*

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