A new school year recently started and the College of Public Health, Department of Health Administration and Policy (DHAP) has welcomed a fresh batch of talented students to its ranks. Like many of the current students in the program, this group offers a diverse background enhancing the learning experience for all. Getting to know these new students will be a pleasure during the first semester.

We already have several reasons to celebrate within the department. Elaine Huckabay, a second year MHA student, recently received the prestigious Dr. Edward N. Brandt scholarship. She was awarded the scholarship at a luncheon sponsored by the Dean of the College and attended by faculty, students and friends of the College and the Department.

The upcoming school year may also yield several exciting opportunities for students. As in years past, we plan to host a number of well-respected guest speakers. Leading off our guest lecture series was Mr. Jim Grocholski. He is currently the CEO of Memorial Hospital of Texas County in Guymon, Oklahoma and the Oklahoma Regent within the American College of Healthcare Executives. His lecture took place on September 24th at 2:00 p.m. in room 220 of the College of Public Health building. He did a wonderful job and we thank him for making the commute.

Also on the calendar is a possible partnership between the College of Public Health Student Association, the College of Medicine, the Health Alliance for the Uninsured, and the University of Oklahoma ACHE affiliate. This endeavor is intended to help form more effective volunteering experiences for students wishing to work within the various Health Alliance clinics.

The DHAP welcomed a number of new students this year for Fall, 2009. The new students are from all over the USA and there are also a few international students. The background of these new students includes some interesting information we thought you might find interesting. For example, Jonathan Michael Gabbard has an A.A.S. in Aerospace Maintenance Technology from Community College of the Air Force and a B.S. in Management from Park University. He believes, “If you had to hit every tree on a golf course, in order to win, then I would be ranked #1”. Brian Loftus with a BA in Political Science with minors in business and history is a collegiate soccer official! Feras Gharfeh graduated with a B.S. in Zoology - Biomedical Sciences from the University of Oklahoma. In his spare time he screams about the best Snow Cone flavor being Bahama Mama and suggests you try it! Ruchi Mago, an international student from India, is a nutritionist. She believes, ”It’s your attitude not your aptitude that determines your altitude in life”. Another student, John Schallhorn, has an undergraduate degree in Business Administration. He wittily answered our inquiry with,” There are no facts about me, only theories.” Someone who has really seen the world is Todd Schuster. He has a Bachelors in Business Administration from the University of Oklahoma '06. Travelling is his passion and he has been to about 20 different countries. They are some members of the great group of new students and we warmly welcome them.
Returning from a summer of hard work and determination in administrative internships and public health practicum experiences are the veteran students of the DHAP programs. These students have entered their last lap of Health Administration and Policy courses and anticipate graduation in either December 2009 or May 2010 with an MHA or MPH degree. Accordingly, we have asked our vets to share information, facts, and opinions regarding their internship experience and the realm of administration in healthcare.

Melissa Tidwell interned with the Executive Director at Tulsa County Health Department. She was involved in high-level negotiations involving key players in our state’s health system. She interestingly described the interactions of various key public leaders and their work on opportunities to improve public health. She worked with several high ranking officials and enjoyed her educational opportunity.

In the OKC metro, several of our vets had internships including: Elaine Huckabay, Shelley Loughrin, Bansari Mehta, Jacy Gelsinger, and Zachary Smith. Ms. Huckabay was with OU Physicians and spent a lot of time working with the nationally benchmarked Press Ganey patient satisfaction scores. She firmly believes that “if you focus on the quality of care, the rest will fall in place.” The Veterans Affairs Medical Center generously offered several internship positions to our students this summer. Ms. Loughrin was responsible for analyzing ALL employee surveys. She said that although she has participated in completing employee surveys as a healthcare provider, she never thought about who was processing, analyzing and interpreting such a massive amount of data.

At Norman Specialty Hospital, part of Zachary Smith’s time was spent designing a virtual tour of the facility. Now that is a task we don’t typically think of in healthcare administration, but proves to be another useful learning opportunity in an internship experience. A thousand miles to the East, Ashlee Skrapke spent the summer interning in Charleston, South Carolina at the Medical University of South Carolina in the Department of Medicine. She was surprised to see the difference between the academic side versus the hospital side. Dealing with physicians in areas such as billing can be a challenge when they are faced with changes in the process.

As you can see, our DHAP students have carried on the tradition of representing the department throughout Oklahoma and the rest of the country. The department continues to provide the healthcare arena with well-trained professionals to deal with the intricate and ever-changing health system. Congratulations on a job well done!

Summer Fun!

DHAP Newsletter

Let us know if there is something you would like us to include in future issues.

Items of Interest

- ACHE members visit Oklahoma State Fair, September 24!
- Feras Gharfeh fills Event Coordinator position.
- Look for upcoming program T-Shirts!!
- Fellowship applications are due soon
- Officer Elections in November!
- New items and announcements have been added to the DHAP Alumni web page. Check it out!

ACHE Officers

President: Zachary Smith
Vice President: Ashlee Skrapke
Treasurer: Jacy Gelsinger
Secretary: Bansari Mehta
Event Coordinator: Feras Gharfeh