

The AFFILIATES

State, regional public health associations

APHA Affiliates bringing public health education to undergrads

A NATIONWIDE movement to bring public health education to the nation's 6 million undergraduate students is growing stronger, thanks to a pilot program launched this spring by APHA's Committee on Affiliates.

As part of CoA's new Connecting with the Colleges initiative, a handful of APHA-affiliated state public health associations are bringing public health professionals together with local colleges and universities. Efforts vary widely as Affiliate leaders sift through opportunities to foster public health education, but all share a common goal of developing undergraduate public health education in the classroom and in the community.

"Instead of one common approach, there are different approaches," said APHA member Marc Hiller, DrPH, MPH, who is leading the New England effort.

CoA's effort to bring public health professionals together with local colleges and universities is rooted in a 2003 Institute of Medicine report, "Who Will Keep the Public Healthy?" which recommended that all undergraduate students should have access to education in public health.

The United States is home to more than 100 graduate-level schools and accredited programs in public health, the majority of which already offer introductory public health courses to undergraduates. However, at least 1,900 U.S. undergraduate institutions

are reportedly without schools or programs in public health.

"This is an activity ready to happen," said Richard Riegelman, MD, PhD, MPH, professor of epidemiology and biostatistics at

George Washington University's School of Public Health and Health Services, who is working with the Affiliate initiative.

"There are practitioners with expertise and faculty who are receptive at the universities, and students who are dying to get involved."

In New England, the Maine Public Health Association is joining in the effort, focusing on strengthening the public health work force, "and among those topics is the value and the importance of undergraduate public health education

as a potential gateway for professional development for public health in the state," Hiller said.

Meanwhile, the New Hampshire Public Health Association is exploring opportunities to obtain

grants to fund a University of New Hampshire effort to assist colleges around the state that are interested in developing undergraduate



Photo by Joe Gough, courtesy iStockphoto

APHA's Affiliates are connecting public health professionals with local colleges.

public health curricula.

For its part, the Maryland Public Health Association plans to kick off its efforts April 6 with a day-long program at Towson University. APHA members Gillian Silver, MPH, CPH, and Susan Radius, PhD, CHES, said the event's goal is to bring community-based experiential public health learning to undergraduates. The event will

bring public health practitioners together with representatives from colleges and universities throughout Maryland.

Similarly, the Virginia Public Health Association plans to bring undergraduate educators from across the state to Richmond on May 1 to explore opportunities for teaching public health at the undergraduate level in Virginia. Because public health has not historically been an undergraduate subject, session participants will be given undergraduate program ideas, said event organizer Ruth Gaare-Bernheim, JD, MPH, who directs the master's in public health program at the University of Virginia.

"We want to pull everybody together, bridge academics and spur the creation of new courses and new energy in the undergraduate public health curriculum," said Gaare-Bernheim, an APHA member.

For more information, visit www.aptrweb.org/undergraduatepublichealth/AboutUs.html or e-mail marc.hiller@unh.edu. ■

— Teddi Dineley Johnson