

# University of South Florida College of Public Health: Reflections on Doctoral Education 1987 - 2005

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## Abstract

*The establishment of doctoral training is a milestone in the chronological and intellectual development of an academic institution. The University of South Florida College of Public Health (COPH) admitted its first doctoral student in the fall of 1987 and graduated its first two in 1992. The USF COPH will top the century mark in PhD graduates in 2005. This article summarizes the history of doctoral education at the USF COPH and provides highlights of a few of the nearly 100 PhD graduates now making a mark on improvement of public health research, education, and practice – in Florida, and elsewhere.*

**Florida Public Health Review, 2005; 2: 92-95**

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## Background

The University of South Florida College of Public Health (USF COPH) was established in July 1984 with an initial enrollment of 100 students. Until completion of its current building in December 1991, its residence was in a vacant section of the Florida Mental Health Institute. Today, the USF COPH houses an auditorium, multi-purpose classrooms with state-of-the-art audiovisual equipment, a distance education studio, computer classrooms, 17 laboratories, and in addition to its large administrative and student support staff, more than 91 faculty members who provide education, research and service that impacts local, state, national and global public health. Since its inception, the USF COPH has graduated 1,975 students and has a current enrollment of approximately 495 students in MPH, MSPH, or MHA programs (some jointly with other degree programs on the USF campus), and 91 full-time and part-time doctoral students seeking the PhD degree. The USF COPH is fully accredited by the Council on Education in Public Health (CEPH), an independent agency that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as the primary accrediting body for schools and colleges of public health. The COPH was recently re-accredited in June 2004 for the seven-year maximum permitted by reaccreditation cycles. Today there are five academic departments in the USF COPH:

- The Department of Community and Family Health, whose activities seek improvement of the health status of the family through an interdisciplinary approach of preventive, curative and rehabilitative health care services within the community, emphasizing collaboration so that public health responsibilities can be carried out in the context of diverse settings.
- The Department of Environmental and Occupational Health, whose offerings include teaching and research in the areas of environmental health, industrial hygiene,

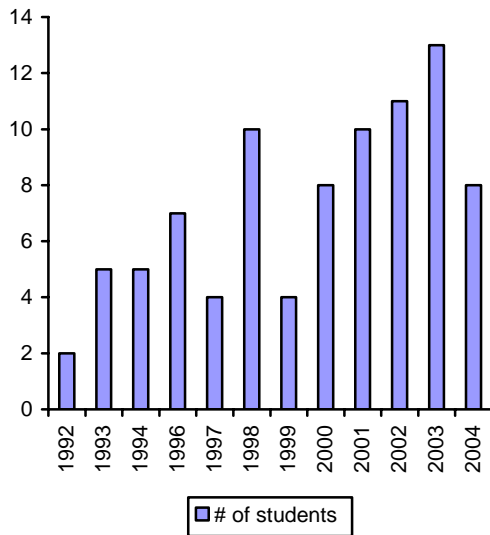
safety management, toxicology, and occupational health.

- The Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, whose students come from backgrounds in the medical, biological, social, and quantitative sciences, and are prepared for careers in the discovery and interpretation of the person, place, and time factors that influence disease causation and levels of health status.
- The Department of Health Policy and Management, whose students are prepared for careers in Health Organizations and Management, Health Policies and Programs, and International Health Management, including skill development for all aspects of organization, financing and delivery of health services.
- The Department of Global Health, where students interested in global health challenges and the emerging infectious diseases worldwide are trained for work that may take them across national borders.

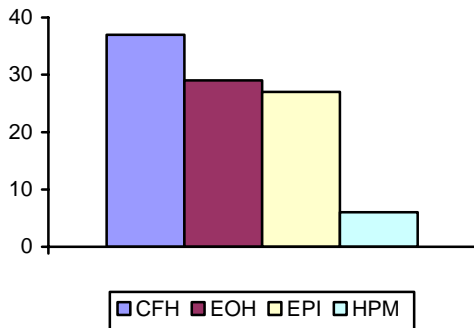
## Doctoral Graduates of the USF COPH (1992-present)

The USF COPH offers the PhD degree, a degree historically known for its rigorous focus on research and quantitative and qualitative sciences. Beginning with 1992, a total of 99 students have received their doctoral degrees from the USF COPH. The first PhD student was admitted to the USF COPH in 1987 (Susan W. Goodrich); the first doctoral student graduates were in 1992 (Jane P. Carver and Eileen M. Emery-Filizof); and the peak year for PhD graduates was 2003 with 13 graduates (Table 1 and Table 2).

**Table 1. Distribution of PhD Graduates by Year**

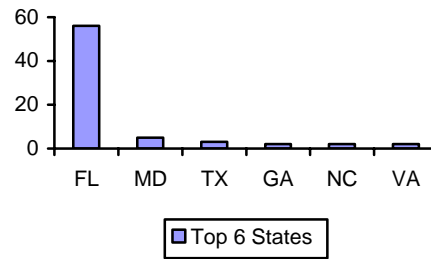


**Table 2. Number of PhD Graduates by Department 1992-present**



Approximately 56 PhD of the 99 USF COPH PhD program graduates still live and work in Florida, with 32 residing in the Tampa / St. Petersburg area. Table 2 shows the top six states where USF COPH doctoral graduates now reside. Other PhD graduates of the USF COPH are involved in public health endeavors in Alabama, Alaska, California, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Washington, and West Virginia plus Puerto Rico (Table 3).

**Table 3. Top Six Residential Locations of PhD Graduates**



The USF COPH PhD graduates are employed in a variety of settings across the United States and its territories. Several graduates are employed by the federal government, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other elements of the U.S. Public Health Service. Others have accepted faculty positions at universities, from the University of Alaska-Anchorage, to the University of Puerto Rico, and institutions of high learning in numerous other states. Four graduates are employed at Florida universities, not including the additional 18 who are employed by a college or center at the University of South Florida. Their positions include the following working titles: post-doc fellow, director, research assistant professor, research associate professor, and the full range of adjunct and tenure-earning faculty. Six are employed as full-time faculty members at the USF COPH.

**Profiles of Selected PhD Graduates**

Whereas it is not feasible to profile every USF COPH doctoral graduate, the following examples illustrate the diversity of the PhD graduates since the inception of the program.

*Roy Beck, MD, PhD*, completed his doctorate in 1993 from the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics. He is the founder of the Jaeb Center for Health Research, located near the USF campus in North Tampa. Currently, he has six projects funded by the National Institutes of Health: (1) Longitudinal Optic Neuritis Study; (2) Pediatric Eye Disease Investigator Group; (3) Cornea Donor Study; (4) Diabetes in Children Research Network; (5) Diabetic Retinopathy Clinical Research Network; and (6) Web-Based Methods Resource Center for Eye Disease Trials. On his curriculum vitae, Dr. Beck lists 155 publications in peer-reviewed journals related to his valuable work on optic neuritis and numerous other ophthalmic conditions.

*Danice K. Stone Eaton, PhD*, graduated in 2002 from the Department of Community and Family Health, and currently serves as a Senior Research Scientist at the Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention, Division of Adolescent and School Health, Surveillance and Evaluation Research Team, in Atlanta, Georgia. Dr. Eaton is currently providing oversight assistance for \$1.2 million related to data collection and analysis for the 2005 *Youth Risk Behavior Survey*, the primary vehicle for monitoring health risk taking by youth in grades 9 through 12. Recently she has been the lead author on two articles published in peer-reviewed journals and two articles published in the CDC's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. However, her vita reveals numerous other achievements in research and other scholarly activity.

*Zuber Mulla, PhD*, graduated in 2001 from the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics. Currently, he is an Assistant Professor of Epidemiology at the School of Public Health, University of Texas Health Science Center in El Paso, Texas. Besides receiving the *Outstanding Teacher Award* in 2004, Dr. Mulla already has published 20 manuscripts (13 as lead author) in peer-reviewed journals. A recent publication of his was selected for inclusion in the 2005 edition of *The Sanford Guide to Antimicrobial Therapy*, a handbook used widely by students and health care professionals.

*Phillip Amuso, PhD*, graduated in 2001 from the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health, and is the current Assistant Bureau Chief, Research Director and Laboratory Director of the Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Laboratories in Tampa, Florida. With an operating budget of \$32 million, Dr. Amuso oversees 310 employees and provides public health laboratory support to all of Florida's 67 counties. In addition, Dr. Amuso serves as the co-principal investigator on a Department of Defense-funded biological defense contract entitled *Enhancement of Public Health Preparedness for Dealing with Bioterrorism*. Lastly, Dr. Amuso is one of three individuals who hold a patent for the early detection of blood pathogens.

*Virginia Noland Dodd, PhD*, graduated in 2000 from the Department of Community and Family Health, and is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Health Education and Behavior, University of Florida College of Health and Human Performance. Dr. Dodd already has demonstrated her excellence as an instructor through receipt of the University of Florida's *Faculty Teaching Award* (2003) and *Professional Excellence in Teaching Award* (2004). To date she has served as a co-principal investigator on four grants and has published 14 manuscripts (7 as lead author).

*Lee Revere, PhD*, graduated in 2002 from the Department of Health Policy and Management. Since that time she has served as an Assistant

Professor of Decision Sciences at the University of Houston – Clear Lake. She is focusing her research on applying decision science techniques and statistical analyses to improve health care management decisions. She has published in a number of business and healthcare journals, including *Journal of Healthcare Management*, *Business Process Management Journal*, *Journal for Health Services Research and Policy*, *Southwestern Business Administration Journal*, and *Applied Financial Economics*.

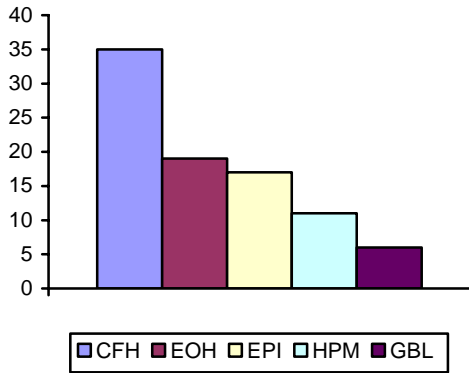
*Clement K. Gwede, PhD*, completed his doctorate from the Department of Community and Family Health in 2001. He is currently Assistant Professor at the University of South Florida College of Medicine, Department of Interdisciplinary Oncology, and a researcher at the H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute, Tampa, Florida. He has been a recipient of a career development award from the National Institutes of Health (National Cancer Institute [NCI]) for research with underrepresented minorities, and an NCI fellowship award for study of cancer, culture and literacy. He has published more than 20 peer-reviewed papers in prestigious journals, including *Journal of the American Medical Association*, *Journal of Oncology Management*, *Applied Clinical Trials*, *AIDS Education and Prevention*, and many others.

A number of the individuals cited above also obtained previous MPH or MSPH degrees from the USF COPH. This type of educational continuity is illustrative of the esteem in which the USF COPH is held by students who indeed have many possibilities for furthering their academic education in public health.

### **Current Status of PhD Students**

Interest in doctoral education at the USF COPH continues to be high (see Table 4). Such interest is a good sign as the public health needs of Florida, the United States, and the world are large in scope and diverse in nature. The USF COPH's newest academic unit, the Department of Global Health, recently admitted its first six PhD students, demonstrating further that public health is a complex series of issues of global importance.

**Table 4. Current Number of PhD Students by Department**



**The Future**

As stated in the USF COPH vision statement, PhD graduates are becoming the 21<sup>st</sup> century’s public health leaders in education, research, policy and practice in Florida, the nation and the world. By creating a scholarly, intellectual

environment that allows students and faculty members to interact and thrive, USF COPH doctoral graduates are evolving their interests, and furthering the development of their passion for learning and scholarship in public health. The net result can only be the creation of healthier communities in Florida, the nation as a whole, and on a global scale.

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