

A History of the Department of Public Health Education

Health education emerged as a profession in the 1940's and the development of standards, professional preparation, and associations has evolved over the past several decades. A concern for disparities in health status between Black and White Americans led to the creation of the Health Education program at North Carolina Central University in 1945. The department was developed as a separate academic department by Dr. James E. Shepard, founder of the University, with the assistance of Dr. Milton Rosenau, a pioneer in the field of public health and director of the School of Public Health at UNC-CH. At that time, Dr. Shepard's goal was to prepare black public health workers for the Southern region of the United States, and he initially organized a graduate program in health education leading to the Master of Science in Public Health.

The initial curriculum was modeled after that at the School of Public Health in Chapel Hill, and UNC professors agreed to teach the same courses here that they taught at Chapel Hill. Later a number of students trained at NCCU assumed teaching responsibilities within our graduate and undergraduate programs (including Ida Gadsen, B.T. McMillon, Howard Fitts, Mary Hawkins, and Mildred Page).

Dr. Lucy S. Morgan, a professor from UNC who helped develop the program at NCCU and taught many of those early classes, served as the first chairperson of the department and is one of the persons for whom the Miller-Morgan Building (which houses Health Education) is named.

Some of the most striking aspects of the graduate program in health education at NCCU were its efforts to promote some limited interracial cooperation at a time when Jim Crow laws were still very strong. A journal club established for health education students at both NCCU and UNC met alternately at the Durham and Chapel Hill campuses. When students met in Chapel Hill, it was sometimes necessary to pull down the window shades to avoid being harassed for racial mixing. Perhaps more importantly, black and white students were assigned to the same field training centers at local health departments and in the community, and they worked together on a variety of community health projects, learning together what was needed to effectively address public health problems.

Unfortunately, students from the two programs did not fair equally well upon graduation. In 1958, a national organization for health educators conducted a survey confirming reports that a large proportion of graduates from the masters program at NCCU were unable to secure employment as public health educators. Only 28% of the 82 graduates of our Department completing the survey were employed in public health. Another 12% were teaching health education or a related subject. The most common reason given by respondents for not working in the field was "race." The difficulty our masters-prepared graduates were having finding employment in health education contributed to enrollment problems, and the graduate program at NCCU was discontinued in 1960, the same year that the School of Public Health at UNC-Chapel Hill admitted its first black students. In its 15 years the NCCU program had graduated 104 masters-level health educators.

Fortunately, NCCU's undergraduate curriculum in health education continued to thrive despite the demise of the graduate program. Established in 1948, it offered a curriculum with concentrations in school health education and community health education, and from 1951 to 1984 the Department conferred 395 baccalaureate degrees. The Department was part of the College of Arts and Sciences until 2007, when it joined the newly established College of Behavioral and Social Sciences.

Below are excerpts from a presentation by former Chair of the Department, B. T. McMillon, delivered at the first Health Education Alumni Conference. His remarks flesh out the early history of our department in a bit more detail.

During this same period (the early to mid 1940's) there was a series of meetings or conferences between Dr. (James E.) Shepard and Dr. Milton J. Rosenau, Dean of the School of Public Health at UNC. The cordial relationship which existed between Dr. Shepard and Dr. Rosenau came about as result of a warm letter of welcome Dr. Shepard sent to Dr. Rosenau upon his arrival in Chapel Hill to assume the duties of Dean of the School of Public Health earlier. The purpose of the meeting was to consult and get ideas for the programs and plans which Dr. Shepard had in mind.

About the same time, Spring 1944, Dr. Shepard received a request from the Mississippi State Board of Health for the training of Negro Public Health Educators. The Mississippi State Board of Health had received a grant to provide scholarships for training Public Health Educators to be divided equally between the races. The White scholarship recipients had already applied and been accepted at the School of Public Health at UNC. Dr. Shepard resolved to accommodate the Negro recipients. With the request in hand, Dr. Shepard called a Committee in his office to consider the establishment of a graduate program for training Public Health Educators.

Representation from the College, the State Health Department, State Department of Public Instruction, Department of Social Service and School of Public Health at UNC met to hear a proposal presented by Dr. Shepard. It was accepted without resistance. The School of Public Health at UNC was asked to assume the responsibility for developing the details. Two committees were formed to expedite planning and included representatives on Admissions (Dr. Leroy Swift, Dr. Turner, Mrs. Jennie D. Taylor, Dr. Lucy Morgan, Ms. Blue and Mr. W. B. Snow) and Curriculum (Dr. Turner, Dr. Morgan, Miss Blue, Mrs. Taylor and Mr. W. B. Snow). Letters and Conferences between Dr. Shepard and Dr. Morgan who was asked to direct the program followed.

The Public Health Education Program started in September 1945 with ten students: Georgia Barbee, Sankie Floyd, Beulah Rowland Hill, Erma Ellingston, Isbel Lee, Oscar Jackson, Annie Mae Kenion, Thelma Morris, Velma Turnage Joyner, and Mabel Walker. There was limited space for the program, but finally a room for holding classes was found in the basement of the Administration Building.

In 1946, Dr. Shepard asked Dr. Lucy Morgan to develop a comprehensive program to serve the entire student body at NCCU. Other plans he was working on included the building of an infirmary. She suggested a committee. He said no. A committee would take too long and time was important. Once the tentative plan was available, he would then appoint a committee. As a result, Dr. Morgan secured the services of Rosemary Kent who did the groundwork on a document entitled "A Suggested Plan for a Total Health Program at North Carolina College for Negroes." The plan stated that practices and principles "that improve, maintain, defend or restore the health of the college student are by no means limited to a department or division of the institution designated as "Health". They permeate all departments and phases of college living.

The Department Today

The Department of Public Health Education is among the nation's leading academic institutions in undergraduate public health education. The program enjoys the unique position of being the only Historically Black College/University holding approval credentials awarded by the Society for Public Health Education and the American Association for Health Education (SABPAC).



NCCU's regional and national influence in public health education practice has been achieved through a half century of growth and expansion, and we have led many prevention initiatives on a broad range of health topics, including heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, lead poisoning, tobacco control, nutrition and physical activity, blood and organ donation, health disparities, and health literacy. Grants secured by faculty have funded most of these initiatives; the Department is one of the most productive in the University in generating research funds.

In 2007, the University approved a name change for the Department from Department of Health Education to Public Health Education. This fresh emphasis on "public" health reflects many factors: greater public awareness of health issues and the importance of prevention, greater access to information through technological innovations, greater perceived health threats (e.g., flu pandemic) from regions outside our own communities, greater concerns about the global health consequences of environmental degradation (i.e. water and air pollution), and greater shifts and immigrations of populations from one region of the world to another. The addition of "public" also aligns our name with that of our national professional standards and credentialing organization, the Society of Public Health Education (SOPHE) and with the titles used in many departments and programs in schools of public health around the country.

The term public health education also more clearly demonstrates the emphasis on ecological factors and the social determinants of health in our coursework on health promotion, disease prevention, and behavioral sciences. Furthermore, our new name underscores the fact that our discipline is an essential component of public health. It also suggests the community focus of our work. A critical way in which public health differs from medicine is that public health works primarily at the community level while medicine usually works at the individual level. Our students do their field placements in community agencies developing community programs. This is how we "do" health education at NCCU and this is the essence of public health.

Vision, mission, goals

The mission of the Department of Health Education is to prepare students, academically and professionally, to assume leadership positions in public health. Students develop proficiency in the application of theory, content, and skills to promote, support and enable healthy communities. We prepare our students to work in a variety of settings, including state and local health departments, schools, private non-profits, hospitals, and worksites, and in both domestic and international communities. A secondary mission of the Department is to promote the health and well being of communities through departmental course offerings, faculty research and community service. Department faculty and staff work within communities to promote sound, life-long, self-directed behaviors and lifestyles conducive to health and to advocate for policies supportive of health and for a more equitable distribution of the resources necessary for health.

Slogan: Stay well. Fare well. *Through Education*

Names and dates of the Unit's beginnings:

1943-1944	Department of Hygiene and Public Health, Dr. Leroy R. Swift Director
1945-1946	First Class, Master of Science in Public Health, in cooperation with UNC Chapel Hill School of Public Health
1948	Undergraduate Department of Health Education established
2007	Approved for name change to Department of Public Health Education

Dates of Principal Programs

1945- 1960	Master of Science in Public Health
1951- 2005	Bachelor of Science in Health Education
2005 -present	Bachelor of Science in Community Health Education

Leaders in Chronological Order with dates

1945 - 1960	Dr. Lucy Morgan, Chair, Graduate Program
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Undergraduate Health Education Program

1947 - 1948	Dr. Brooklyn T. McMillon
1949 - 1951	Dr. Ida Gadsen
1954 - 1987	Dr. Howard M. Fitts
1994 - 2000	Dr. Theodore R. Parrish
2000 - 2006	Dr. M. LaVerne Reid
2006 - 2009	Dr. LaHoma Smith Romocki
2009 -	Dr. David Jolly

Buildings in which the Unit has been housed

1940- 1947	Basement of Dr. James E. Shepard Administration Building
1947-1982	Old Health Building
1982-	Miller-Morgan Health Sciences Building

Early goals, mission, vision statements

- To prepare black public health workers for the Southern region of the United States

Outstanding achievements of the unit, leaders

- NCCU is the only Historically Black College or University (HBCU) to have a health education program approved by the SOPHE-AAHE Baccalaureate Program Approval Credential (SABPAC).
- Ninety percent of faculty hold terminal degrees.
- Forty percent of faculty have been distinguished by receiving outstanding teaching awards at NCCU.

- Despite its small size the Department has continually placed near the top of all NCCU departments in the total number of research grants and dollars awarded. In 2007, this amount exceeded \$619,000.

Selected accomplishments

- The Eagle Pride Blood Drive is a national model for campus-based blood drives. Since its origin in the early sixties, the Drive has collected close to 20,000 units on campus. The units have served about 52,000 patients in the community. Additionally, the Drive received the American Red Cross Award for Recruitment of Minorities and the Lt. Gen. Frank Petersen Jr. Award for sponsoring joint marrow donor and blood drives on a historically Black college campuses and recruiting more than 5,000 minority members to the National Marrow Donor Program Registry.

Theodore Parrish received the NCCU Chancellor's Merit Award for

Community Service and the Outstanding Faculty Award for securing more than \$1,000,000 in external funding dollars.

LaHoma Smith Romocki developed a 4-week work study program in health in Dodowa, Ghana, West Africa and was honored by the US Peace Corps with the Franklin Williams Award for Outstanding Community Service and the President's Award for Outstanding Community Service.

Mary E. Hawkins received the Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE) Mentor Award and the SOPHE Presidential Citation for 14-year Chairmanship of the SOPHE/AAHE Baccalaureate Program Approval Credential. Ms. Hawkins was one of the original designers of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Internship Program for Minority-Serving Institutions.

Howard Fitts was awarded Professor Emeritus status at North Carolina Central University and was honored with a \$25,000 gift to North Carolina Central University by the Kate B. Reynolds Foundation in recognition of his service on its Board of Directors.

Brooklyn was awarded Honorary Doctorate by North Carolina Central University.

Mildred O. Page brought national media attention to the Department and the University as a senior citizen faculty teaching Human Sexuality and for 50 years of teaching at NCCU.

The Department-sponsored Student Coalition Against Tobacco (SCAT) designed and conducted successful campaigns to ban smoking in all NCCU residence halls and to establish a 25 feet smoking perimeter around all building entrances on campus. The Department-sponsored Project SAFE, an HIV/STD peer education group, has served as a model for similar projects at other HBCUs across North Carolina.

Outstanding alumni

- Tanya Bowden Bass, HIV/AIDS Policy and Programs Consultant, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
- Kwain Bryant, Senior Health Education Consultant, Empowerment Exchange, Charlotte, NC
- Carlotta Lee McNeill, Director of Prevention Services, Alliance of AIDS Services-Carolina
- William Darity, former Dean School of Public Health, the University of Massachusetts, and former member of the UNC Board of Governors
- Ed Ellis, Retired Professor, University of Connecticut
- Howard Fitts, Professor Emeritus and former Chair, NCCU Department of Health Education
- Denise S. Ford, Professor of Health Education; Howard University
- Dr. Ida Gadsen, Former Chair, NCCU Department of Health Education, first African American female to receive terminal degree in Health Education
- Mary E. Hawkins, Chair of Society of Public Health Education/American Association for Health Education Baccalaureate Program Approval Committee (SABPAC)
- Gloria Haynes, Director of Cooperative and Foundation relations Development, NCCU
- Attorney Anita Holmes, Executive Director, Carolianace, Durham
- Vickie Killimanjara, Editor, The Carolina Peacemaker, Greensboro, and major donor to the University
- Brooklyn T. McMillon, former Chair, NCCU Department of Health Education, University Registrar, and presently University Historian
- Margaret Pollard, nationally recognized community organizer
- Kenneth Ray, Program Manager, Tobacco Use Prevention Program, Georgia Division of Public Health
- LaVerne Reid, Associate Dean, College of Behavioral and Social Sciences, North Carolina Central University
- Blaine Smith, established scholarship for NCCU health education majors
- Mary Townes, former Dean, North Carolina Central University College of Arts and Sciences, namesake of the Mary Townes Science Building
- Margo Thombs, International Program Specialist, Howard University
- Georgia Williams Barbee McCallum, major donor of scholarship funds for the Department Catherine Wright, Chair, Department of Health Education, Johnson C. Smith University

Prepared by Howard Fitts, Ed.D, Mary Hawkins, M.S.P.H., David Jolly, D.P.H.,
Booker T. McMillon, M.S.P.H., Mildred Page, LaHoma Smith Romocki, Ph.D.
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References:

Gadsden, I.J. (1969). Social Implications of the Public Health Education program at North Carolina College at Durham. Health Educators at Work.

Korstad, R. (1989). Dreaming of A Time; the School of Public Health, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1939-1989.



The Helen S. Miller and Lucy Shields Morgan Building