

THE DEAN'S LETTER FOR TUFTS NUTRITION



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WHITE HOUSE HIGHLIGHTS TUFTS' CHILDHOOD OBESITY RESEARCH

First Lady Michelle Obama pointed to the **Shape Up Somerville** program, under the direction of Associate Professor **Christina Economos**, Ph.D., as an example to follow when she announced the launch of "Let's Move," a national campaign to fight childhood obesity. Somerville Mayor Joseph Curtatone, who spoke at the event last month, credited Economos and the Tufts team with starting the program seven years ago. "It's truly amazing how our local initiative has spurred similar programs and initiatives and served as a model of best practices in communities across

the country," he said in a press release.

Much like the Shape Up program, which resulted in Somerville children gaining less weight than their peers in other communities, the Let's Move campaign aims to provide schools, families and communities with simple tools to help kids be more active, eat better and get healthy. At the U.S. Conference of Mayors in January, Michelle Obama pointed to Shape Up Somerville as a national leader in the campaign against childhood obesity, citing local best practices to be used in a national model.

HUMANITARIANS LOOK AHEAD

Professor **Peter Walker**, Ph.D., led an interactive Friedman School web seminar titled "From Afghanistan to Haiti: the Future of Humanitarian Assistance." Listen to it online at: <http://www.learningtimes.net/tufts/walker-recording>.

"Humanitarian Horizons: A Practitioners' Guide to the Future," published by the Feinstein International Center at Tufts and the Humanitarian Futures Program at King's College, London, advocates the need for programs to reduce vulnerability in urban settings. Most humanitarian efforts and aid have been focused on rural development rather than the needs of the urban poor, yet as the IRIN, a humanitarian news service, reports, "About 810 million people already live in city slums, battling overcrowding, insecure tenure, landslides, flooding, poor sanitation, unsafe housing, inadequate nutrition and poor health." Download the report at the Feinstein International Center website: <http://fic.tufts.edu>.

RESEARCH UPDATES

Adjunct Assistant Professor **Virginia Chomitz**, Ph.D., had an article on the collaborative Healthy Living Cambridge Kids weight promotion work published in this month's special supplement to the journal *Obesity*. In February, she gave a presentation on "Physical Activity among Middle School Students in Somerville, MA: Trends Over Time and in Relation to a Comparison Community" at the Active Living Research conference in San Diego.

HERE & THERE

Assistant Professor **Sai Krupa Das**, Ph.D., was invited to be a visiting lecturer in the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (National University of Malaysia). During her weeklong visit in January, Das shared her expertise on calorie restriction and aging and gave recommendations for designing and conducting a calorie restriction study in Malaysia. In addition, she conducted workshops on body composition assessment and scientific manuscript writing. She also worked with faculty and postgraduate students to evaluate their research and determine possibilities for collaboration.

Adjunct Professor **Johanna Dwyer**, D.Sc., spoke on micronutrient supplements and chronic disease prevention at conference sponsored by the Brazilian Nutrition Society in Sao Paulo. In February she hosted visitors from the Dublin Technical Institute's Erasmus Mundi European Masters' program. Professor **James Tillotson**, Ph.D., and Assistant Professor **Odilia Bermudez**, Ph.D., as well as Dwyer, have served as Erasmus lecturers over the past several years.

Assistant Professor **Paul Giguere**, Ed.D., director of distance learning, and Heather McMorrow, senior instructional design specialist for the Friedman School, presented a paper titled "International Hybrid Distance Learning: Addressing 21st Century Needs for the Middle East and Beyond" at the third annual Forum on e-Learning Excellence in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE), in February.

Associate Professor **Parke Wilde**, Ph.D., gave a presentation in January to the Community Development and Applied Economics Department at the University of Vermont titled "Disciplined But Not Obstinate: Some Success Stories in Interdisciplinary Food System Research." In November, he served on an external panel to offer input on PepsiCo's corporate responsibility reporting. The panel, which reflected food and beverage manufacturers' interest in understanding the food policy concerns that motivate consumers, was convened at PepsiCo headquarters by CERES, a network of investor representatives and public interest organizations. In the same vein, Wilde will give a talk this month in Washington, D.C., at the 2010 Science Forum of the Grocery Manufacturers Association, the industry's principal trade organization.

Assistant Professor **Andrew Wilder**, Ph.D., shared the findings of his Afghanistan research with an assortment of influential groups and individuals in Kabul, including U.S. General Stanley McChrystal, commander of U.S. and NATO forces, and Karl Eikenberry, the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan.

He also spoke to with representatives from NGOs and to diplomats at a briefing organized by the British Embassy.

AWARDS & ACCOLADES

Professor **Jeffrey Blumberg**, Ph.D., has been elected as a fellow of the American Society for Nutrition.

Lindsay Schoonmaker was promoted to assistant director of stewardship and constituent relations in the Friedman School's development office. Schoonmaker, who joined Tufts in 2005 as the department's staff assistant, was promoted the following year to coordinator of stewardship and events, a new position in which she developed strategies for stewarding donors, tackled the many details of an expanded events schedule and created new communications vehicles for the department, including e-newsletters, redesigned web pages and social media. She has also been playing an increasing role in the management of Alumni Association activities.

FRIEDMAN FACULTY IN THE NEWS

Professor **Jeffrey Blumberg**, Ph.D., responded to chocolate health claims in a *Seattle Times* article, saying the research has largely focused on indicators of health, like blood pressure, rather than actual heart disease. He pointed out, "I think it's critically important to remember, no matter how you cut it, chocolate is still not a health food."

Associate Professor **Miriam Nelson**, Ph.D., commented on the likelihood of gaining results from an expensive cross-training machine that promises to work in four minutes of use a day. She told the *San Francisco Chronicle* online, "If the four-minute workout truly worked, everything we know about fitness and metabolism would be wrong. I just don't buy it."

A case study in *Time* magazine's "Living Longer" cover article described the CALERIE (Comprehensive Assessment of Long-term Effects of Restricting Intake of Energy) study at Tufts, in which volunteers decrease their caloric intake by 25 percent for two years. The multi-location study, led at the USDA HNRCA by Professor **Susan Roberts**, Ph.D., is examining the effect of calorie restriction on health and longevity.

Roberts was quoted in a *New York Times* article on fast food restaurants that advertise their dishes as diet foods. She spoke about her research that found foods from 29 chain restaurants had more calories, on average, than their stated values. As part of the research, she spent 10 days eating a variety of foods, including one fast-food meal a day, trying to lose weight. But she did not shed weight and attributes that largely to fast and commercially prepared food. "At first I thought it was just the sodium, but it went on," said Roberts.

The *New York Times* used Professor **Peter Walker's** blog as a source for article explaining why money donations are the best way to help Haiti. He noted that in his experience with earthquakes, 95 percent of victims who are rescued alive from collapsed structures are rescued within the first 48 hours. "International search and rescue teams may be great gestures of solidarity and shared concern, but they have little chance of getting to the

disaster site in time to do any real good," he wrote.

COMING RIGHT UP

Are you looking to get fresh fruits and vegetables straight from the farm delivered right to campus? Consider joining the **World PEAS CSA** (Community Supported Agriculture) program. World PEAS is a multi-producer marketing cooperative that combines produce from several small farms in eastern Massachusetts that are participating in Tufts' **New Entry Sustainable Farming Project** to provide a diverse box of fruits and vegetables perfect for a household of two (small share) or enough to serve roughly four or five adults (large share). Each week of the season (18 weeks from June through October, plus an optional extended season share monthly through the holidays), program farmers harvest their produce, which World PEAS staff then package along with a recipe-packed newsletter and deliver to convenient pickup locations in the greater Boston and Lowell areas, including the Tufts campuses in Boston and Medford/Somerville. For more information or to sign up, visit www.worldpeascsa.org.

The Friedman School Alumni Association's Washington, D.C., chapter invites you to a networking cocktail reception to mingle with current Friedman students, alumni and organizations that have hosted Friedman student interns. The event will be held on Monday, March 15, from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the Hotel Tabard Inn in Washington, D.C. Register for this event at alumni.nutrition.tufts.edu.

The Friedman School Alumni Association has announced the winners of the 2010 Alumni Awards:

- Leadership Award: **Andrew Shao**, Ph.D., N00, vice president for scientific & regulatory affairs, Council for Responsible Nutrition
- Expertise/Innovation Award: **Daniel Hoffman**, Ph.D., N00, associate professor, Rutgers University
- Leah Horowitz Humanitarian Award: **Courtney Anderson**, N09, MPH 09, monitoring and evaluation consultant, Health and Nutrition Program, World Vision (Cambodia)

The awards will be given out during the Sunday program of the annual All Alumni Reunion, which will take place April 10–12: <http://alumni.nutrition.tufts.edu/?pid=73&c=124>

The reunion will feature a special tribute to graduates of the Food Policy and Applied Nutrition (FPAN) and Social Science of Food Policy and Nutrition (SSFPN) programs. Alumni of all programs are invited and encouraged to attend. A complete reunion program is available at: <http://alumni.nutrition.tufts.edu/?pid=73&c=124>.

Please join us for the entire weekend and stay for the Gershoff Symposium on Monday, April 12, when the topic will be "Drivers of Food Intake: What's Behind the Wheel." Symposium speakers and topics include:

- "Eating: What, Where, How and Why?," with Megan McCrory, Ph.D., assistant professor of foods and nutrition, Purdue University
- "Food Addiction: What Is It About?," with Marcia Pelchat, Ph.D., associate member, Monell Chemical Senses Center
- "Food: Drug of Choice?," with Gene-Jack Wang, M.D., senior scientist, Brookhaven National Laboratory
- "Food Addiction: Is it Ripe for Policy?," with Richard Daynard, J.D., Ph.D., professor, School of Law, Northeastern University

Are you going to Experimental Biology (EB)? If so, please consider registering for the Friedman School and HNRCA reception hosted by **Dean Eileen Kennedy** and Professor **Simin Meydani**, center director. Join us Monday, April 26, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at the Anaheim Marriott in Anaheim, Calif. Register now at alumni.nutrition.tufts.edu.

Please note this event is by invitation only. If you have a friend or business colleague who you want invited, please email Lindsay Schoonmaker at lindsay.schoonmaker@tufts.edu.

The deadline for the next issue of the *Dean's Letter for Tufts Nutrition* is **Wednesday, March 31, 2010**. Please send your submissions to Julie Flaherty at julie.flaherty@tufts.edu.