

THE DEAN'S LETTER FOR TUFTS NUTRITION



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FORGING A WAY FORWARD FOR HAITI

Professor **Patrick Webb**, Ph.D., spent three weeks in Haiti during February and March conducting a post-disaster needs assessment for the World Bank, UNICEF and the World Food Programme. He helped prepare a document that was the basis for a conference in New York City on March 31, when representatives of countries made monetary pledges in support of reconstruction of the island nation. As director of the nutrition component of the document, Webb was asked to determine the damage and economic losses incurred in the nutrition and food security sector, estimate the cost of replacing those losses over three years, and design a plan for a complete transformation of nutrition and food security over

a decade. He will continue to support this effort from Boston over the coming weeks and months.

The Friedman School has other connections in Haiti. Webb met five graduates who were also working on the relief effort, representing Concern Worldwide, World Vision, UNICEF, the World Food Programme and the office of the U.N. Special Envoy, Bill Clinton.

TUFTS STUDY PROMPTS LEGISLATIVE ACTION

A recent study by **Susan Roberts**, Ph.D., that showed several frozen food products and restaurant meals misrepresent their caloric content has prompted a congressman to call for change.

Saying he was “deeply concerned” by the results of the study, which found calorie discrepancies of up to 200 percent, Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-N.Y.) called on the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to conduct a thorough review of the ways it regulates and monitors nutritional labeling.

In a letter to FDA Commissioner Margaret A. Hamburg, Hinchey highlighted 20 year-old rules, which often go unenforced, that allow companies and fast food chains to exceed their stated nutritional content by as much as 20 percent.

“The American people have the right to know exactly what they are eating and what the true

nutritional value is for packaged food products and fast food meals,” said Hinchey, a member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, which oversees the FDA’s budget. “Nutritional labels on frozen foods and fast food meals are virtually useless if they are off by 20 percent or more. The public shouldn’t have to guess the nutritional value of what they are eating when they purchase these meals. In a society that is plagued by obesity, it’s incumbent upon packaged food companies and fast food chain restaurants to end these misleading practices and accurately report nutritional information.”

Hinchey said he was hopeful the FDA would act swiftly in reviewing its policies, but if not, said he was prepared to introduce legislation that would “revamp the entire system and require accurate nutritional information to be labeled and posted.”

On average, the calorie content information provided by the restaurants was 18 percent less than the researcher’s calorie content analysis. Two side dishes exceeded the restaurant’s reported calorie information by nearly 200 percent. The calorie content information reported by packaged food companies averaged 8 percent less than the researchers’ analysis.

REMEMBERING JOAN BERGSTROM

Joan Bergstrom, Ed.D., the former chair of the Friedman School’s Board of Overseers and a Tufts trustee emeritus, passed away on April 6. A 1962 Tufts graduate and founder and director of the Center for International Education, Leadership and Innovation at Wheelock College, Bergstrom sought to improve the lives of children worldwide. “As an educator, author, consultant and entrepreneur, she was a true Renaissance woman whose tremendous grace and intelligence made a deep and lasting impact,” said Dean **Eileen Kennedy**. “I am proud and blessed to have had Joan as a friend. I will miss her wise counsel as well as the thoughtful and passionate leadership that she offered to the Friedman School. She was a wonderful champion and friend of Tufts University.” Bergstrom’s books include *School’s Out!*, *All the Best Contests for Kids (5th edition)* and *The Best Summer Ever*.

AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

This fall, Adjunct Professor **Johanna Dwyer**, D.Sc., and Professor **Jeanne Goldberg**, Ph.D., will be awarded with Dean’s Medals, the highest honor given by schools within Tufts University. These medals are reserved for those select individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the university and the greater community. The Friedman School will host a reception in their honor on Saturday, November 6, in conjunction with the annual American Dietetic Association conference and the Friedman Symposium. Event details to come soon.

Liz Cochary Gross, Ph.D., N82, N88, a Friedman School overseer, founding president of the Friedman Alumni Association and the school’s vice chair for Beyond Boundaries, the university’s ongoing campaign, received a Distinguished Service Award from the Tufts University Alumni Association on April 10. She was recognized for being a champion and advocate of the Friedman School since her graduation from the first class in 1982. The award is the highest honor bestowed by the alumni association.

FACULTY NEWS

Associate Professor **Christina Economos**, Ph.D., N96, holder of the New Balance Chair in Childhood Nutrition, will take over as director of the Nutrition Communication Program on July 1. The program was created by founding director Jeanne Goldberg, Ph.D., G59, N86, J92P, in 1995 in recognition of the need for communications professionals who are able to interpret research studies and results and communicate that information in ways the public can understand. To date, more than 80 students have graduated from the program.

Assistant Professor **Paul Giguere**, Ed.D., has been named senior director of academic initiatives, a new position at the Friedman School. He will direct the newly formed Office of Academic Initiatives (OAI), which enhance the school's educational mission through the development and support of new and existing degree programs, continuing education and distance learning initiatives. More details about the OAI will be made available over the next few weeks.

Michael McBurney, Ph.D., has joined the Tufts faculty as an adjunct professor. He has been head of scientific affairs at DSM Nutritional Products Inc., since 1998. Previously, he was a professor and founding head of the Department of Nutrition and Food Science at Texas A&M University. He will be participating in two sessions at the upcoming Experimental Biology Conference, one on the "Challenges of Integrating Genomics, Dietary Guidance and Risk Reduction into Nutrition Policy: Vitamin E, a Case Study" and another on "Nutrients of Concern and Nutrition Disparities: Trends from NHANES Surveys and Market Research." Information on both can be found on the ASN website.

Christian Peters, Ph.D., has joined the faculty as an assistant professor in the Agriculture, Food and Environment Program. He received his B.S. in environmental sciences from Cook College, Rutgers University. After service in the AmeriCorps Program and several farming internships, he decided to pursue graduate studies (M.S. and Ph.D.) in soil and crop sciences at Cornell University. He was a postdoctoral associate in the Department of Crop and Soil Sciences at Cornell through 2009. Throughout his graduate and postdoctoral research, Peters has focused on modeling the capacity of land to provide human food needs. Specifically, he has developed a spreadsheet model to estimate the agricultural land requirements of the human diet and, consequently, the capacity of farmland to feed human populations. In addition, he has developed a spatial model for mapping potential local foodsheds that analyzes the capacity for cities to meet their food needs from local and regional land resources.

Several Tufts faculty took part in an NIH Office of Dietary Supplements-sponsored workshop titled "Economic Analysis of Nutrition Interventions: Methods, Research and Policy" in February. Session chairs and speakers from Tufts included Professor Emeritus **Robert Russell**, M.D.; Adjunct Professor **Johanna Dwyer**, D.Sc.; and Professors **Peter Neumann**, Sc.D., and **John Wong**, M.D., of Tufts Medical School. This workshop showed how cost can and will be part of the conversation among methodologists, researchers and policy makers. The workshop brought together U.S. and international academic and government researchers, policymakers and regulators to address the state of the science, research applications and regulatory and policymaker perspectives.

Instructor **Elizabeth Stites** presented her work on livelihoods in Uganda at a workshop hosted by the University of Wisconsin-Madison called “New Perspectives on Gender and Human Security.”

Professor **Helen Young**, Ph.D., attended a two-day meeting on “Adapting to Climate Change in Darfur: Retreat on the Environmental Challenges in Three Darfur States” in El Fasher, Sudan. She gave a paper titled “Livelihoods, Climate Change and Conflict,” drawing on her work since 2004, and facilitated a working group on pastoralism and climate change. The meeting was attended by senior U.N. representatives and several federal and state ministers. In Khartoum, she met with representatives of the Darfur Transitional Regional Authority, the Darfur Land Commission and Nomad Council to discuss possible collaborations.

RESEARCH UPDATES

Assistant Professor **Kate Sadler**, Ph.D., Professor **Bea Rogers**, Ph.D., Assistant Professor **Jennifer Coates**, Ph.D., and **Elizabeth Bontrager**, N08, an assistant researcher at the Feinstein International Center, were in Ethiopia last month to begin work on evaluating a new food program funded by USAID and implemented by Save the Children Ethiopia. The Food by Prescription program provides nutrient-dense supplementary food to malnourished HIV patients, with the goal of delaying the need to start anti-retroviral therapy and improving response to treatment once drug therapy begins. Sadler is principal investigator on the project, which will assess the effectiveness and cost of the program over the next two years.

FRIEDMAN FACULTY IN THE NEWS

Science magazine spoke with Associate Professor **Andrew Greenberg**, M.D., about the reasons male rodents are used more often than females in research. Female rodents have a four-day ovarian cycle, so researchers who use them must take daily vaginal swabs in experiments where hormones might play a role. “Otherwise, the data are uninterpretable,” Greenberg said.

Gershoff Professor **Alice Lichtenstein**, D.Sc., lent her perspective to the role of fats in the diet for an online article in *U.S. News & World Report*. She talked about the call to reduce fat in the diet in the late 1980s. The problem, she said, is “if you take out saturated fat, and you assume someone is in energy balance [i.e. their total calories haven’t changed], what do you put in?” In the 1990s, people replaced that fat with simple carbohydrates and refined sugar.

Associate Professor **Joel Mason**, M.D., spoke with *Prevention* magazine about his research associating folic acid fortification to a rise in colon cancer cases. “It’s a critical enough issue that it can’t be ignored,” he said.

For a *Boston Globe* article looking at the nutritional needs of marathoners, Assistant Professor **Jennifer Sachek** recommended eating a breakfast high in carbs with a little lean protein, and then topping that off with another high-carb snack such as a bagel before the race. “You need to be smart about what you eat for dinner the night before and day of the race,” she said. “Think about a small snack an hour or two before.”

Associate Professor **Parke Wilde**, Ph.D., was asked about his research on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for a *Scientific American* story about the government's concern that the program may be contributing to the obesity epidemic. Regarding a proposal to distribute benefits biweekly, he said, "It's just a little change in the environment that still gives people freedom [to shop as often as they want], yet gives them a slightly different sense of the default behavior. I'm always surprised that there's not more interest in the idea."

COMING RIGHT UP

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, May 26. Please send your submissions to Julie Flaherty at julie.flaherty@tufts.edu.