

**Master of Public Health Program, a Joint Program of the University of Nebraska
Medical Center and the University of Nebraska at Omaha**

**Engaged Institutions Initiative: Eliminating Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities
Elmer Freeman**

The UNMC/UNO Master of Public Health Program, UNMC College of Public Health, was selected in January, 2006 as one of 12 Schools and Programs of Public Health nationwide to receive the W.K Kellogg Foundation *Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities: Schools and Graduate Programs of Public Health Respond as Engaged Institutions* award. The initiative's purpose is to pro-actively support schools and graduate programs of public health that are ready to take on the challenge of becoming engaged institutions focused on eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities. Engaged institutions are defined by the Kellogg Foundation as those that "invest in lasting relationships with communities and whose relationships influence, shape and promote the success of both the institution and the community." Administered through the Community-Campus Partnerships for Health (CCPH), the project goals are to build the capacity of (1) schools and graduate programs of public health to fully realize their potential as engaged institutions focused on eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities; and (2) community partners to develop authentic partnerships with schools and graduate programs of public health that address racial and ethnic health disparities.

One of the major components of the initiative is intensive consultation to assist in assessing our capacity as engaged institutions; identifying strengths, limitations, opportunities and challenges; developing strategic priorities for action; and coaching/mentoring in developing strategic action plans. Elmer Freeman, PhD (c) was selected to consult with the Omaha project May 9 and 10, 2007. He is the executive director of the Center for Community Health Education Research and Service (CCHERS) which is a partnership to promote reform in health professions education among Boston University School of Medicine, Northeastern University Bouve College of Health Sciences, Boston Medical Center, the Boston Public Health Commission and 15 community health centers in Boston. Previously, Mr. Freeman served as Executive Director of the Whittier Street Health Center, Assistant Director of the Mattapan Community Health Center and as a Planner/Analyst at the Health Planning Council for Greater Boston. He is an adjunct professor at Northeastern University Bouve College of Health Sciences School of Nursing.

The purpose of Mr. Freeman's visit is to help assess the university's capacity and to assist in ways to form and strengthen community-campus partnerships to reduce health disparities. University faculty, staff, students and administrators; community based health organizations, and capstone preceptors will have several opportunities to meet with Mr. Freeman during his upcoming visit.

Engaged Institutions Initiative: Eliminating Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Barbara Holland

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One of the major components of the initiative is intensive consultation to assist in assessing our capacity as engaged institutions; identifying strengths, limitations, opportunities and challenges; developing strategic priorities for action; and coaching/mentoring in developing strategic action plans. This consultation will begin with a visit by Barbara Holland, Ph.D., director of the National Service Learning Clearinghouse. She also holds appointments as Senior Scholar in the Center for Service Learning at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, and Adjunct Professor at the University of Western Sydney and Australian Catholic University. During her visit, November 29 and 30, she will conduct focus groups with faculty, students, and administrators/staff. She will also speak to a general audience in a Grand Rounds setting and provide technical assistance.

Desired outcomes of Dr. Holland's visit and subsequent activities would be answers to the following questions:

- Where are we with respect to engagement;
- Where are we with respect to eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities;
- Where do we want to be with respect to eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities; and
- How are we going to get there?

These questions have become even more important since the development of the UNMC College of Public Health of which the joint UNMC/UNO MPH Program is an important component. The College's broader scope of Public Health expands institutional responsibility for assessment and building of capacity and collaboration with community partners to eliminate health disparities.

The "Engaged Institutions" Task Force has been in place since February, 2006 and is comprised of administrators, faculty, and staff. Its members have been working on assessing institutional capacity and preparing for the consultant's visit.

10/24/06 ams

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