



March 23, 2017

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UofSC Arnold School of Public Health to expand to Greenville

The University of South Carolina's nationally-renowned Arnold School of Public Health will open a satellite program in Greenville focused on research and education that tackles some of South Carolina's most pressing health needs. The expansion, a partnership with Greenville Health System (GHS) Health Sciences Center and the USC School of Medicine Greenville, will allow students to receive graduate-level education at the intersection of public health and clinical medicine and conduct cutting-edge research into solutions to public health problems.

In addition to four current public health faculty members, three new public health scientists will be located on GHS' campus and are scheduled to begin as early as this fall. The expansion is a reflection of the Arnold School's position as the state's only accredited public health school as well as a desire for health systems like GHS to work proactively to address regional population health issues such as stroke, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, and obesity.

"The opportunity to expand the important work of the Arnold School of Public Health into one of the largest health care delivery systems in South Carolina is huge for our students and faculty," said Thomas Chandler, dean of the Arnold School. "We are internationally known for our hands-on work in reducing health disparities in South Carolina communities through effective outreach, education and research programs. Chronic disease prevention and management requires a community population-health focus to be successful."

The Arnold School is one of the most respected public health colleges in the country, ranking No. 1 in the nation for its exercise science doctoral program. Overall, USC offers 100 health science degrees and boasts 17 nationally ranked health science programs.

Faculty at the new Arnold School location will teach in established graduate degree programs such as the Master of Public Health in Health Promotion, Education and Behavior, as well as Public Health Management and a professional Master of Health Administration. The Arnold

School is currently developing a long-term plan for future activities, but later expansion is expected to include interdisciplinary graduate degree options that combine public health with clinical medicine, nursing, pharmacy and other health disciplines.

The partnership with GHS and other health systems within the state enables public health research and graduate courses to be focused on the particular challenges encountered in real-world care delivery systems and applying public health principles to reduce preventable diseases. Examples include using the most effective population-level behavioral change methods to reduce unhealthy habits and personal choices around diet, tobacco use, physical inactivity and stress—behaviors that can contribute to stroke, cancer, diabetes, heart disease and obesity.

“Because a person’s health is affected by the environment in which she or he lives, both health systems and patients are rewarded with improved health status when their communities are healthier and more supportive of healthful behaviors such as walking and smart dietary choices. That’s population health,” said Ronnie Horner, associate dean for clinical public health in the Arnold School’s new Office of Clinical Public Health, which provides administrative oversight for the new satellite program.

Combining population health strategies with clinical medicine to fight disease also helps reduce long-term health care costs because it often reduces the need for more expensive medical treatments incurred by preventable chronic health conditions. “The goal is to keep the patients healthy by making better lifestyle choices,” Horner said.

Along with teaching, satellite program faculty will conduct research related to population health improvement through direct work within the health delivery system and through GHS’ Health Sciences Center, which fosters and facilitates research collaborations between USC faculty and GHS clinicians.

“Bringing and hiring new faculty to Greenville who are experts in community work in behavioral sciences, epidemiology/biostatistics and health systems management will create exciting new opportunities for everyone involved,” Chandler said. “More important are the likely enhancements to the health care delivery system’s ability to improve health status for most Greenville area citizens and beyond.”

The Arnold School of Public Health was established in 1975 as the 19th accredited school of public health in the nation. It is the primary public health research and education resource for the residents of South Carolina and is tied with the University of Florida as the fourth largest public health school at a state university. With particular focus on physical activity, nutrition and cancer prevention, it prepares the next generation of professional practitioners and scholars to serve communities and impact disease prevention through public health education

and active intervention. It is named in honor of the late Columbia business leader Norman J. Arnold and his wife, Gerry Sue.