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# End-of-Year Report to the Harvard Chan School Community

Dean Michelle A. Williams, SM '88, ScD '91

'17



**HARVARD T.H. CHAN**  
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

## Dear faculty, students, alumni, staff, researchers, supporters, and other friends,

At this year's Commencement, I spoke of a public health movement—a shared mission that goes beyond our individual fields and concerns. This movement has gained enormous momentum over this past year as we confront a newly redefined and deeply troubling political landscape.

Now, having concluded this academic year—my first as Dean—I want to take some time to reflect on the role of the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health at the forefront of today's public health movement. I could not possibly list everything we have accomplished together during this past year. That said, I do want to highlight some of our most notable achievements in areas that include education, research, diversity and inclusion, building community, and expanding impact—all of which have fueled our mission to create a better, healthier world. This report continues and expands on my December 2016 end-of-year reflections, which you also can read online at [hsph.me/2016-eoy](https://hsph.me/2016-eoy).<sup>(Z)</sup>



Dean Williams addresses students, families, and faculty at the 2017 Commencement Ceremony.

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# Advancing our people, serving the world

An overarching goal of the past year has been to invest in people in ways that advance our shared mission. We are only as good as our people, and to do their best work, people need adequate resources and support.

That we can move forward on these and other fronts is largely due to many generous donors. Given the changing federal funding landscape, these gifts are increasingly critical to our future. This is especially evident as we start to see the impact of the historic \$350 million endowment gift from The Morningside Foundation, a philanthropic entity established by the family of **Gerald Chan, SM '75, SD '79, and Ronnie Chan**. While only a few of our donors are highlighted here, we are truly appreciative of each and every one.

Also, some very exciting news: In the final days of this academic year, we concluded another historic gift to establish the Zhu Family Center for Global Cancer Prevention and two affiliated professorships. This \$30 million gift—the second largest in the School's history—includes interdisciplinary research funding that will have an impact across the School and will foster collaboration across the University, throughout Boston, and around the globe. Its potential benefits are incalculable, and we are deeply grateful.

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### Increased faculty support

One of this year's most important accomplishments is an increase in junior faculty support from 10 percent to 20 percent, a key step toward reducing the burden on young/early-career researchers to raise their own salaries. This has been a long-standing goal and a critical issue for our community, especially given federal budget proposals that significantly reduce National Institutes of Health and other public health funding. We remain committed to further increasing this percentage over time.

### New endowed professorships

A soon-to-be-publicly-announced gift from Campaign Co-Chairs **Jonathan Lavine, MBA '92, and Jeannie Lavine, AB '88, MBA '92**, will establish a new professorship in humanitarian studies. And congratulations to **Miguel**

**Hernan**, appointed as the inaugural Kolokotronis Professor of Biostatistics and Epidemiology. Endowed professorships are the highest honor bestowed upon faculty members. This chair was established through a 2015 gift from **Wendy and Theo Kolokotronis, MBA '70**.

### New (but familiar) faces on the senior leadership team

Harvard Chan's people are—and will continue to be—one of my major focuses as Dean. In this, I have been greatly helped by three deeply experienced additions to my team: **Meredith Rosenthal** as senior associate dean for academic affairs and **Betty Johnson** as assistant dean for faculty and staff diversity, development and leadership. (Much more on diversity and inclusion in a dedicated section below.) I am also delighted to announce the recent appointment of

**Ashish K. Jha** [↗](#) to the role of senior associate dean, research translation and global strategy. Ashish will oversee key strategic partnerships and priorities and take the lead on supporting Harvard Chan faculty engaged in a range of School-wide initiatives. I have no doubt he will make extraordinary contributions in this new role.

### New faculty appointments

This year, we were thrilled to welcome 13 new primary faculty members across six departments. They are:

**Michael Barnett**, Assistant Professor of Health Policy and Management

**Sara Bleich**, Professor of Public Health Policy

**Mary Finlay**, Lecturer on Health Policy and Management

**Albert Hofman**, Stephen B. Kay Family Professor of Public Health and Clinical Epidemiology

**Lindsay Jaacks**, Assistant Professor of

Global Health and Population

**Mariam Krikorian**, Assistant Professor of Health Management

**Jeffrey Miller**, Assistant Professor of Biostatistics

**Elise Robinson**, Assistant Professor of Epidemiology

**Pardis Sabeti**, Professor of Immunology and Infectious Diseases (joint appointment with Faculty of Arts and Sciences)

**Kristopher Sarosiek**, Assistant Professor of Radiation Biology

**Richard Siegrist**, Lecturer on Health Care Management

**Aisha Yousafzai**, Associate Professor of Global Health

**Chi-Man (Winnie) Yip**, Professor of the Practice of Global Health Policy and Economics

Congratulations, too, to **Francesca Dominici** [↗](#), newly appointed co-director of Harvard's new University-wide Data Science Initiative, which will

connect research efforts across Harvard in ways that, in Francesca's words, "extend our ability to use data science for the good of people everywhere."

### More student aid

Expanding financial aid is an ongoing commitment and a major focus for the

final year of our fundraising campaign. This year, for the first time, we began to cover tuition and health insurance for all SD students, and we will be rolling out dissertation completion fellowships and parental support in the coming academic year. (This is a step toward bringing SD funding in line with PhD support.) In the upcoming academic



LEFT  
Nicholas Arisco, SM '18

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year, we have also committed to half-tuition scholarships for all of our DrPH students who have financial need and do not have other tuition funding.

### **Strong staff engagement**

A 2017 staff engagement survey showed many strengths (as well as some room for improvement). On the positive side, more than two-thirds of respondents said that they feel engaged (69%), that they have a comfortable place to bring their ideas and thoughts on engagement (71%), and have met one-on-one with their manager to discuss engagement (72%). We will continue to work to improve on various fronts, including the use of flextime.

### **More alumni activities**

With [this year's Commencement](#), 684 Harvard Chan graduates joined our alumni community, now more

than 13,500 strong. Alumni are tremendously important members of the Harvard Chan family, and we are committed to expanding opportunities for them to stay connected to each other and to the School.

A key goal for our alumni programs is to foster professional growth and career advancement—for students as well as alumni. Through this year's alumni-hosted Student Career Treks to Washington, D.C., and New York, 65 of our students met with alumni who shared insights into their public health work at more than a dozen organizations, including NGOs, government agencies, consulting firms, and biotech companies.

Along with the establishment of an Atlanta chapter of the Harvard Chan School Alumni Association—which brings us to a total of seven chapters around the world—we launched a

Global Alumni Connectors program for areas with too few alumni to support an independent chapter. Within the first few months of starting this program, we have 15 alumni volunteers helping us strengthen alumni connections in cities that include Cape Town, Houston, Johannesburg, Mexico City, Minneapolis, and Vancouver, British Columbia.

### **Bridging worlds—The Public Health Salons**

One of the most powerful ways to invest in people is to connect them with one another. It's with this idea in mind that Gerald Chan and I launched a series of Public Health Salons that bring together Harvard Chan faculty with experts in biotechnology, civic leaders, and artists. In this way, we seek to foster the sort of cross-disciplinary and multisectoral conversations that lead to breakthrough thinking and,

ultimately, better health for all. To date, we've hosted three such gatherings at Parsnip Restaurant in Harvard Square, and we look forward to more next year.



# Advancing our educational mission

We are, at heart, a place of learning, and the past year saw big developments on the educational front. Here are some of the highlights.

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### New academic leadership

Departments with new chairs include Epidemiology, where the newly arrived **Albert Hofman** succeeded me as chair; Nutrition, where **Frank Hu** succeeded **Walter Willett**; and Environmental Health, where **Russ Hauser** became interim chair, succeeding **Doug Dockery**. Heartfelt thanks to those



stepping down for their extraordinary years of service, and congratulations and best wishes to their outstanding successors!

Degree programs with new faculty directors include the PhD in Population Health Sciences, where **Lisa Berkman**

takes the helm from **S V (“Subu”) Subramanian**, and our DrPH program, where **Richard Siegrist** now serves as interim director, succeeding **Peter Berman**.

### Expanded and enhanced educational programs

In recent years, we’ve embarked on a major reorganization of our educational programs, with the goal of better meeting the needs of 21st-century students and the fast-changing world they seek to serve. We made much progress in 2017, and I want to highlight a few of the most significant milestones:

*New master’s degree programs.* A growing number of outstanding college graduates aspire to careers in public health but lack an advanced degree. Our new three-semester (65 credit) MPH program allows them to trim a semester from the practice-oriented

LEFT  
**Frank Hu**, professor of nutrition and epidemiology and chair, Department of Nutrition, speaking at an event, February 2017.

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SM degree program that was their previous option. They thus get back to the workforce more quickly while also leaving with a degree that more clearly signals their expertise, something many students had called for. The MPH is now our primary professional master's degree, and the SM is our research-focused master's degree. The first "MPH-65" cohort arrived on campus this past fall.

We also recently admitted the first cohorts for two new master's programs: The SM in Health Data Science and the MPH/Master's in Urban Planning dual degree with Harvard's Graduate School of Design, another step toward greater collaboration across disciplines and Schools.

Finally, our "blended" MPH in Epidemiology graduated its first 48 students this spring. Building on the courses we created for [HarvardX](#), this

innovative program combines online, on-campus, and in-the-field learning, making study far more accessible for those with family, work, or other commitments that would make it difficult for them to be on campus full time. It is the first such degree program to be offered at a Harvard professional school. We are conducting an extensive evaluation of the program, in collaboration with the University's Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning. I'm delighted to say that initial evaluation outcomes appear strong.

*New doctoral programs.* Our PhD in Population Health Sciences is a remarkable collaboration across five Harvard Chan departments, an innovative interdisciplinary program that is the first of its kind in the United States. Our goal is to develop a cadre of scientists who are both well-versed in issues that cut across

public health fields and have deep expertise in a single area—the T-shaped ideal. This research-focused degree is yet another example of how we are leveraging resources and expertise across disciplines to tackle complex challenges and questions. The program welcomed its first students this past fall, and a second cohort arrives on campus in August.

Meanwhile, our newly redesigned DrPH program graduated its first eight students this spring. This multidisciplinary professional program was created to prepare students to lead health-focused organizations, including government agencies, NGOs, and businesses—a recognition of the growing demand for leadership training that crosses disciplinary lines. The DrPH program is a major beneficiary of a \$10 million anonymous gift that will support scholarships, leadership training, and

the establishment of a professorship to be named in honor of my predecessor as Dean, **Julio Frenk**. As noted in my December 2016 letter, this generous gift will support leadership of the DrPH program and provide much-needed aid to students—called Prajna Fellows—in the DrPH program, the Department of Nutrition, and the Occupational and Environmental Medicine Residency Program. The DrPH program also benefited from the critical past support of longtime friends of the School **Richard L. (MBA '59) and Ronay A. Menschel**.

#### **Beyond traditional students— education for leaders and citizens**

We are committed not only to training students enrolled in our degree programs but also to filling the world's far broader needs for public health education at a pivotal moment in history. Prominent among these

are advanced education for senior leaders in government and the health sector, both domestically and globally, and education for the citizens who ultimately drive change. Our broadcast-quality Leadership Studio continues to reach new audiences and forge new partnerships with media outlets and outside institutions. Heading up these initiatives is [Robert Blendon](#), senior associate dean for policy translation and leadership development. Bob will continue to report directly to me, a reflection of the key role of these programs at the Harvard Chan School.

#### **Gift to establish the Rose Service Learning Program**

This program, made possible by a generous \$5 million gift from **Dr. Deborah Rose, SM '75**, will offer fellowships that involve service and engagement with global communities in the context of rigorous academic

study—something that excites me tremendously. It builds on the Rose Traveling Fellowship, established in 2010 to support opportunities for cross-cultural exchange for students and postdoctoral fellows in epidemiology and biostatistics. The new program will be open to students, postdoctoral fellows, and junior faculty members from across the School.

#### **Accreditation progress**

Our intensive review takes place once every seven years. I want to give a shout-out to all those who have invested enormous time and energy over the past 18 months in a process that takes place largely away from public view. We had a very successful site visit—a critical piece of this process—and have fully met all but three of 28 accreditation criteria. We are moving to address these last few remaining matters.



## Advancing our research mission

Research pushes forward the frontiers of knowledge and drives human progress. It is fundamental to everything we do. That said, we face significant headwinds given the current federal funding and political environments.

These times call on us to be both agile and creative—to identify new partners and funding streams that will support powerful ideas throughout their life cycles. To that end, here are some of the most significant steps we've taken during this past year.

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### **Moving forward on research strategy**

Our Research Strategy Review, released in May of last year, provides a broad vision for our research activities through the year 2030. This past year, we've implemented several key recommendations, including: making faculty meetings more participatory, more transparency in faculty recruitment, development of a proposal to expand access to data science and biostatistics resources, and enhanced coordination between the School's sponsored research and development offices.

As we move toward broader implementation, we remain committed to the same grassroots and participatory principles that have been central to this process from the start. Our April faculty retreat saw robust discussion of next steps, including the strategic development of "research platforms,"

key resources that can be shared among investigators and thus leveraged across the School. Task forces focused on priority setting will be convened in the early fall.

### **Launch of Dean's Fund for Scientific Advancement**

This new initiative will establish a pipeline of internal grant opportunities, ranging from early stage "idea activation" pilot projects conducted by junior faculty to advanced research grounded in data and involving multidisciplinary teams. Goals include both expanding internal funding opportunities (a strong recommendation from the Research Strategy Review) and increasing our competitiveness for outside funding. The fund will support great ideas at various points in their life cycles and home in on areas where the School's multidisciplinary expertise is of

particular value. Funded projects will benefit from a newly coordinated support system designed to help grant recipients develop sustainable funding streams, as described in the next paragraph. Specific details on the Requests for Application process will be released by early fall.



**Enhanced support for research proposal development**

Over the past academic year, the Office of Research Strategy and Development (ORSD) helped faculty apply for more than \$75 million in sponsored research funding through programs that include faculty grant-writing short courses, external review and editing services,

and coordination of large-scale grant proposals. In addition, ORSD is spearheading efforts to better position the Harvard Chan School to secure and diversify research funding through stronger coordination with the Office for External Relations and Office of Technology Development.

**\$4.9 million to establish Biobank for Microbiome Research in Massachusetts (BIOM-Mass)**

BIOM-Mass will ultimately house the world’s most comprehensive human microbiome sample collection, obtained from more than 25,000 individuals from the School-based Nurses’ Health Study II and other long-running cohort studies. The grant comes from the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center, a \$1 billion public-private partnership with the mission of advancing the life sciences sector in Massachusetts, and it marks a major

LEFT  
Grace Lee, research associate, Department of Genetics and Complex Diseases.

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milestone in our ongoing efforts to diversify our funding sources. In addition, the grant application involved faculty across four departments, two Harvard-affiliated hospitals, and industry partners, making it a powerful example of the potential for partnerships both within and beyond Harvard.

### Research that changes the world

Harvard Chan research not only advances the frontiers of knowledge, it also saves lives through exploration of issues ranging from air and water pollution to nutrition to HIV/AIDS. To this end, a soon-to-be-publicly-announced \$2 million gift from **Lisa Schwartz and Mark Schwartz, AB '76, MBA '78, MPP '79**, will provide flexible resources to support research in climate change, sustainability, and human health, areas that will be major focuses for us going forward.

We also celebrated a major milestone with the 20th anniversary of the Botswana-Harvard Partnership (BHP). Created as a collaboration between Harvard and the government of Botswana during the height of the AIDS epidemic in Southern Africa, the BHP conducted research that led to record low rates of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and ultimately the development of protocols used globally to prevent mother-to-child transmission. BHP's "treatment as prevention" approach, which reduces transmission by reducing HIV-infected people's viral loads, has similarly informed guidelines around the world. The program is now poised to expand its impact by deploying its robust research teams, community partnerships, and laboratory resources to combat noncommunicable diseases and cancer, along with continued work in HIV/AIDS.

# Advancing diversity and inclusion

This core value informs everything we do—from hiring and recruitment practices to student life to education and research—reflecting our commitment to equity and social justice. It is beautifully reflected in the [“You are welcome here” video](#) created by our Communications Office in collaboration with the Office of Education. The video features 114 students, faculty, staff, and others from 44 countries affirming our ideals of creating an inclusive and welcoming environment.

We strive to create an environment that is both diverse (in its reflection of the vast swath of backgrounds and experiences) and inclusive (in that it gives everyone an equal opportunity to thrive and contribute). In service to these twin goals, we embarked on a number of initiatives during this past year, spearheaded by our Office of Diversity and Inclusion. Among them:

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### New implicit-bias training for search committees

In partnership with the Office of Faculty Affairs, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion developed and launched implicit-bias training for all faculty search committees. The goals are to raise awareness of how unconscious bias can infect the recruitment process—for example, when letters use different adjectives to describe male

and female candidates—and introduce strategies to minimize its impact.

### New training for cross-cultural teaching

Last April, more than 100 Harvard Chan faculty members attended a three-hour cultural awareness and communication workshop, with the goal of improving students' classroom experiences. The workshop was



LEFT  
Meredith Rosenthal, senior associate dean for academic affairs and professor of health economics and policy, speaking at the annual LGBTQA Pride Week Reception, May 2017.

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informed by responses to newly added course evaluation questions that ask students to reflect on inclusive environments and their experience of “microaggressions,” offhand comments or other slights that have too often been ignored or overlooked despite the real harm they cause.

#### **New student-orientation program**

Last August, we introduced a daylong program focused on issues of power, privilege, and identity. “Self, Social, and Global Awareness” is highly interactive, with a focus on small-group discussion. It is now a standard part of student orientation, one that we will continue to update and improve based on feedback and lessons learned. The program met an enthusiastic reception, with students embracing the opportunity for group reflection and saying they’d like to see this material carried over into the academic year

through both curricular and service work. (This program was modeled closely on, and draws its name from, a program developed at Columbia’s Mailman School of Public Health, and we are grateful to the Mailman friends who helped us bring it to the Harvard Chan School.)

#### **New anonymous bias-related incident-reporting system**

The new system, which operates through a University platform, allows the School to track and address concerns as they arise and better support members of the Harvard Chan community who experience bias.

#### **Creation of the Harvard Chan Community Advisory Network**

The Harvard Chan School exists within a Boston community, and we are committed to strengthening our

connections with our neighbors. The new advisory network is designed to give community leaders a voice in shaping our evolving community engagement strategy.

### Expanding awareness, sparking conversation

Beyond these concrete initiatives, we are also deeply attuned to the larger issue of School culture. What kinds of conversations does our environment support and encourage? With an eye to sparking both exchanges and personal reflection, we recently convened the symposium “Slavery & Public Health: Past, Present, and Future,” which built on the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study’s “Universities and Slavery: Bound by History” conference.

In conjunction with the symposium, we unveiled the powerful “Ghost Portraits” exhibit, which honors African-

Americans and Native Americans who made significant public health contributions but have received little recognition in large part due to the legacy of slavery and racial oppression. The installation—which places the “ghost portraits” beside official portraits of the School’s previous leaders—continues in Kresge’s Rosenau Atrium. If you haven’t yet taken time to visit it, I hope you will.



LEFT  
(Left to right) John Shanks, director, Police Training Institute; David Williams, professor of public health, Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences; moderator Phillip Martin, senior investigative reporter, WGBH News. Forum event on Race and Policing, spring 2017.

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# Looking ahead

In the coming year, we will continue to push hard to raise funding for priorities at the heart of our ongoing capital campaign, many of which were mentioned above. These include more financial aid and additional endowed professorships.

Improving our physical campus will also be a major focus. The Harvard Chan School is now scattered across 25 locations, at last count. In the words of one younger faculty member: “We don’t have the place to be who we want to become.” This needs to change. If this School is to fulfill its potential, we must build a campus for the 21st century, and I am fully committed to doing all in my power to make that happen.

We are also deeply concerned about how to expand the impact of public health voices and ideas in a world where the very notion of evidence-based argument is under fire. With

this goal in mind, we will be launching Health Writes: The Public Voice of Public Health, an initiative that will pull together and strategically build on existing health communications–related programs to empower faculty and students to have a greater impact in public forums ranging from newspapers to the halls of Congress. In the words of our Commencement speaker **Gina McCarthy**, former administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and a Richard L. and Ronay A. Menschel Senior Leadership Fellow this past spring: “It’s not enough to do science. You need to speak for the science in ways real people can understand. We need to speak, and we need to speak loudly.”

These are just a few of the areas where we will be moving forward. There is much, much more to come. Stay tuned!

Josh Levine / Harvard Chan

## Thank you

Last April, we brought Harvard's three Longwood schools together for a remarkable event aimed at empowering all of us in service to the public health movement. During this program—"Organizing for Health: People, Power and Change"—renowned community organizer and Kennedy School lecturer **Marshall Ganz, AB '64, MPA '93, PhD '00**, shared his insights about how best to channel our energies at a time of unprecedented threat to programs that protect human health. (You can watch the webcast [here](#) [2].) The challenge Ganz posed: to turn solidarity in the face of a common threat into solidarity on behalf of a common purpose.

I see this happening every day at the Harvard Chan School—and I am so grateful to every one of you for your many and diverse contributions. Together, you make us what we are: an unstoppable force at the forefront of today's public health movement. Never has your work been more important than it is today.

With admiration and thanks,



Michelle A. Williams, SM '88, ScD '91  
Dean of the Faculty  
Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health



Marshall Ganz on community organizing and public narrative, Spring 2017.

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