



SDSU School of Public Health

2020 Newsletter

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Director's Message

What a semester this has been! From dealing with the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, to shifting to a virtual online teaching environment, to adapting our research programming in a constantly changing environment. During this time, I have been so impressed by our collective student, faculty, staff and alumni persistence and resilience. Most impressive is how individuals have thrived and indeed led during these trying times. From students at the frontlines of our county COVID-19 response, to faculty working on critical grants and contracts related to the pandemic, as well as continuing to address broader health issues, our school has stepped up to the plate. There has never been a greater need for nor a better time to apply our

public health expertise and to impact our communities. Here's to a happy holiday season, a vaccine, and to getting involved and helping where we can!

Eyal Oren, Ph.D., MS
Interim Director, SDSU School of Public Health



Faculty Highlight

Dr. Lauren Brown

Health Management and Policy

Initially from the Inland Empire, Dr. Brown started her academic career at USC for her undergraduate studies where she played on the women's soccer team and won a National Championship. During her undergraduate years while living in South Central Los Angeles, she became invested in learning about the health equity framework, leading to her choosing to advance her education. At the Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine in New Orleans, she spent her time learning about Black health in a Black city, and the intersectionality among global health systems. Following her MPH, Dr. Brown worked with a geriatrician in the LAC + USC Medical Center where she became intrigued in race-related health disparities, specifically why Black and Brown older adults were aging faster.

Throughout her Ph.D. in Gerontology, Dr. Brown invested her time learning about the legacy of research in Black and Brown



to reshape their stories", Dr. Brown states. Through her work, Dr. Brown challenges narratives and retells the story of African Americans and Black health.

SDSU was Dr. Brown's choice because the diversity in Southern California will allow her to work in conjunction with the community she loves and has motivated her work, as well as the diversity of the student body and its drive to improve the healthcare system. In her short time at SDSU, Dr. Brown has already gone above

communities, ensuring her work centered the community and shaping her research in a way that benefited them. She saw the way literature imposes a story of defeat, prompting her to ensure her work changed that direction, “Black people have the agency

and beyond to advocate for, support and mentor students. The School of Public Health is incredibly lucky to have her and is pleased to welcome her!

Undergraduate Student Highlight *Jenny Adams*



Jenny Adams chose public health route for its wide range of opportunities to explore different career paths. SDSU has provided a supportive environment with helpful advisors and peers, and opportunities to grow her leadership skills while engaging in communities across San Diego and south of the border.

During her third year at SDSU she is serving as the President of SDSU’s [Public Health Initiative](#) (PHI), a student-run organization dedicated to promoting health and supporting communities in San Diego and Ensenada, Baja California. PHI has allowed her to already start putting her public health studies into practice composing community health needs assessments, practicing grant proposal writing, organizing public health-related fundraisers, among other things. She has also had the opportunity of working with Drs. [Kristen Emory](#) and [Deborah Morton](#) in the COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy Survey Study. Looking forward, Ms. Adams will be applying to a Physician Assistant program, where she will apply her public health experience into addressing disparities in healthcare.

Graduate Student Highlight *Jade Johnson* *Environmental Health Sciences*

During her undergraduate years at SDSU, Jade Johnson became interested in environmental health after attending the Conference [Society for Advancing Chicanas and Native Americans](#) in Science (SACNAS) at Washington, D.C. While presenting her research at the SACNAS conference, Ms. Johnson met a recruiter who encouraged her to apply to the National Science Foundation’s Research Experience for



broader implications of environmental health research--from policy to its direct impact on communities, as she saw while conducting

Undergraduates program which led to her spending two summers at University of Montana, where one summer she found elevated arsenic levels in water samples from Navajo Nation. Seeing how families rely on those water sources and being part of the Navajo Nation herself, Ms. Johnson felt inclined to get further involved in related research.

For her undergraduate degree at SDSU, Ms. Johnson studied Chemistry with minors in Sustainability and Math, giving her experience with quantifiable data and interventions, Environmental Health is now giving her extended tools on how to apply that knowledge into practice. The Environmental Health training has shown her the importance of thinking of the

research with the Navajo Nation's water quality. Her current research with Drs. [Eunha Hoh](#) and [Natalie Mladenov](#) focuses on evaluating decentralized wastewater treatment technologies for removing trace organic chemicals using non-targeted mass spectrometry.

SDSU has also provided a sense of community, primarily through the [Center for the Advancement of Students in Academia](#), and the [Native Resource Center](#) which gave her the space to include indigenous perspectives in her time in academia. [Ms. Johnson](#) has recently been named a [Switzer Fellow](#), a prestigious fellowship awarded to outstanding graduate students working for environmental improvement, and will continue her work supporting environmental justice after the program.

Alumni Highlight

Brit Colanter

Epidemiology Alumni

County of San Diego, Epidemiology and Immunization Branch



Upon finishing her bachelor's in Health Sciences and Community Health Education at California State University, Long Beach, Brit Colanter headed to Lusaka, Zambia to spend a year working in a primary healthcare

including the 2009 emergency of pandemic H1N1 influenza which started in San Diego. The H1N1 pandemic caused the field of public health to rapidly evolve, making the County better prepared for infectious disease outbreaks and response. Working for the County of San Diego's Epidemiology and Immunization Branch as an Epidemiologist II for the past 15 years, Ms. Colanter performs year-round influenza surveillance, as well as many other morbidity and mortality data analysis projects. She is also part of a team that does daily syndromic surveillance to evaluate trends of emergency department chief complaint and diagnosis data for bioterrorism surveillance purposes, looking for increases in syndrome categories, clusters of illnesses, and following up with hospitals as needed. As part COVID-19 response, she is helping to confirm COVID-19 deaths were laboratory-confirmed, San Diego County residents, and if they had underlying conditions.

Ms. Colanter says San Diego County Public Health is a wonderful place to work, and her academic experience at SDSU School of Public Health adequately prepared her to

outreach program. The extremely important role of public health to prevent illness was made evident during her time in Africa, prompting her to apply to the Master's in Public Health Epidemiology program at SDSU after returning home to San Diego. As a graduate student, she became focused on infectious diseases, specifically studying the influenza pandemic of 1918-19, which proved useful since from day one, her work as an epidemiologist has included influenza surveillance.

tackle her role as an Epidemiologist for the County. Working at the County has allowed her to grow so much both professionally and personally. She encourages others to follow their passions and pursue internships that will expose them to their fields of interest. After twenty years, she is preparing to wrap up her public health career and retire, the School of Public Health wishes her best of luck and thanks her for her service to the community.

SDSU School of Public Health Celebrates 40 Years



The School of Public Health will be celebrating its 40th Anniversary on **April 6 to April 12, 2021**, all events will be taken place remotely. The celebratory evening gala will be postponed until 2022, more information forthcoming.

Thank you for your continued support!

To support the ongoing efforts of the SDSU School of Public Health, follow the link to make a donation.

ACT NOW



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