Affiliate Faculty Profile:  
Steve Konkel, PhD

Dr. Steve Konkel was hired in January to coordinate the UAA Minor in Public Health, which begins enrolling students this fall. Dr. Konkel is a tenure-track associate professor in the College of Health. His roles include coordinating the new 18-credit minor and expanding the Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences tracks. He will teach Introduction to Global Health and the Program Evaluation elective this fall.

Dr. Konkel comes to UAA with over two decades of teaching and research in environmental health. He holds a bachelor’s degree in Architectural Engineering (University of Colorado), a master’s degree in City Planning (Harvard’s Graduate School of Design), and a PhD in environmental policy development and conflict resolution techniques (MIT-Harvard Public Disputes Program). “Environmental health science is a key piece of public health,” Konkel said. He notes that approximately one-quarter of disease is due to exposure to environmental factors (WHO).

Dr. Konkel grew up in Colorado and moved to Juneau, Alaska in 1982 where he served for two years in Governor Jay Hammond’s second administration as a Policy and Program Analyst for rural energy, renewable energy, and statewide energy planning.

Dr. Konkel has been employed widely around the U.S. and even in Ireland. In 2007-2008, he was a Fulbright Scholar based at the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), School of Food Science and Environmental Health. He was also appointed as Senior Research Fellow, Health and Environment at the DIT. In July 2010, the Irish government established the Environmental Health Sciences Institute (conceptualized during Dr. Konkel’s Fulbright), the largest research grant in DIT’s 120-year history.

Dr. Konkel remarked that the delivery of the new minor is timely and should put UAA on the map in delivering public health courses to undergraduates and graduate students. The Association of American Colleges and Universities recommends that all undergraduate students have exposure to public health. “It is a critical component of good citizenship,” Dr. Konkel said. “This minor is a way of delivering that. It has a number of really positive student outcomes, such as gaining knowledge about other cultures and places, gaining intellectual and practical skills, and understanding personal and social responsibilities related to population health.”

When not working, Dr. Konkel enjoys traveling around the world gaining exposure to other cultures and building networks of friends and professionals. Since 2006, he has presented papers in Dublin, Brisbane, and Vancouver. In Alaska, he enjoys fly-fishing, flight-seeing, photography, biking, and hiking. He especially enjoys the Kenai River and the Wrangell-St. Elias mountain range near Yakutat.
Where do MPH alumni and MPH students currently live?

United States

International
- Tashkent, Uzbekistan
- Yellowknife, NWT, Canada
- Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada
Alumni Profile: Wendy Parsons

Wendy Parsons will receive her MPH in Summer 2012. Her thesis is titled “Anchorage School District (ASD) School Wellness Policy Evaluation,” which looks at changes in BMI of elementary-age ASD students after adoption of the wellness policy. This work focuses on childhood obesity to determine if school district policy changes make a difference in the weight status of students. Wendy has been a school nurse in the Anchorage School District since 1988. In the school setting, she is able to touch the lives and affect the health of students, their families, and ASD staff. Wendy believes the school setting can provide a positive influence in terms of wellness for the school community. She plans to continue as a school nurse after graduation, providing health care, education, and sponsoring projects such as Walk To School Day for students and Bike To Work Day for staff at Campbell Elementary. Wendy likes to read, walk, bike, camp, garden, and cross-country ski. She has two grown children and is currently a host parent for an exchange student from Chile.

Alumni Profile: Patsy Peshel

Patsy Peshel will graduate with her MPH degree in Spring 2012. Her thesis project assesses water utilization and hygiene practices at the Rhema Grace Orphanage and Ombe Village in Cameroon, Africa. Her project is part of an interdisciplinary collaboration between the UAA MPH Program and the Engineers Without Borders–UAA Student Chapter. Patsy presented her findings at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s International Symposium and the Alaska Public Health Summit. In 1997, Patsy earned a BS in Occupational Education with a minor in human services and a specialization in nursing services from Wayland Baptist University. She was a foster parent for the State of Alaska Office of Children’s Services from 1997-2003, and has worked as a case manager and care coordinator in Anchorage and the Mat-Su Valley. Presently, Patsy serves as the Interim Director of CareNet, Inc., a home care provider in Anchorage. Patsy enjoys traveling, making jewelry, gardening, and spending time with friends and family.

Scholarships for Textbooks
The UAA MPH Alumni Association created a series of Global Health Scholarships for current students. These $50 awards are available for reimbursing textbook costs for Summer 2012. Applicants must be currently accepted into the MPH program and in good academic standing. For more information, contact Tammy Zulz (tsc3@cdc.gov) or visit: http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/healthsciences/ mph/scholarships.cfm. The deadline is May 25, 2012!

Don’t Miss the 15th International Congress on Circumpolar Health
Join over 600 public health and medical research colleagues at the 15th International Congress on Circumpolar Health in Fairbanks, Alaska from August 5-10, 2012. The Congress will feature thought-provoking keynote addresses, workshops, information sessions, social activities, and networking activities. For more information and to register, visit www.icch15.com.

Scholarships for Textbooks
The UAA MPH Alumni Association created a series of Global Health Scholarships for current students. These $50 awards are available for reimbursing textbook costs for Summer 2012. Applicants must be currently accepted into the MPH program and in good academic standing. For more information, contact Tammy Zulz (tsc3@cdc.gov) or visit: http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/healthsciences/mph/scholarships.cfm. The deadline is May 25, 2012!

Don’t Miss the 15th International Congress on Circumpolar Health
Join over 600 public health and medical research colleagues at the 15th International Congress on Circumpolar Health in Fairbanks, Alaska from August 5-10, 2012. The Congress will feature thought-provoking keynote addresses, workshops, information sessions, social activities, and networking activities. For more information and to register, visit www.icch15.com.

Scholarships for Textbooks
The UAA MPH Alumni Association created a series of Global Health Scholarships for current students. These $50 awards are available for reimbursing textbook costs for Summer 2012. Applicants must be currently accepted into the MPH program and in good academic standing. For more information, contact Tammy Zulz (tsc3@cdc.gov) or visit: http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/healthsciences/mph/scholarships.cfm. The deadline is May 25, 2012!

Don’t Miss the 15th International Congress on Circumpolar Health
Join over 600 public health and medical research colleagues at the 15th International Congress on Circumpolar Health in Fairbanks, Alaska from August 5-10, 2012. The Congress will feature thought-provoking keynote addresses, workshops, information sessions, social activities, and networking activities. For more information and to register, visit www.icch15.com.

Scholarships for Textbooks
The UAA MPH Alumni Association created a series of Global Health Scholarships for current students. These $50 awards are available for reimbursing textbook costs for Summer 2012. Applicants must be currently accepted into the MPH program and in good academic standing. For more information, contact Tammy Zulz (tsc3@cdc.gov) or visit: http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/healthsciences/mph/scholarships.cfm. The deadline is May 25, 2012!

Don’t Miss the 15th International Congress on Circumpolar Health
Join over 600 public health and medical research colleagues at the 15th International Congress on Circumpolar Health in Fairbanks, Alaska from August 5-10, 2012. The Congress will feature thought-provoking keynote addresses, workshops, information sessions, social activities, and networking activities. For more information and to register, visit www.icch15.com.
As the snow melts and days lengthen, we are looking forward to another fantastic Alaskan summer season! Thank you to everyone who helped us celebrate National Public Health Week in Alaska April 2-8, 2012.

Mayor Sullivan issued an honorary proclamation, Dean Bill Hogan recorded a video highlighting the daily activities on campus and off, and many community and campus partners participated throughout the week. Special thanks to UAA MPH Alumna Kathy Anderson who helped organize our first Delta Omega Day of Service activity at the Horizon House this year. Stay tuned for more opportunities to get involved.

I just returned from the national Health Promotion Summit in Washington DC co-sponsored by the Association for Prevention Teaching and Research. The Summit highlighted several exciting Healthy People 2020 initiatives and new prevention opportunities imbedded in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. For more, visit http://www.atpm.org/2012summit.html.

Another focus of attention in DC was the new March 2012 Institute of Medicine Report about the integration of primary care and public health to support population health. If you haven’t seen this important report, which is likely to have positive impacts on public health (and primary care) practice, I encourage you to check it out. You can download the report at: http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2012/Primary-Care-and-Public-Health.aspx.

We are beginning two innovative USDA-funded collaborations with academic and practice partners. One focuses on pediatric obesity with the University of Hawaii and Asian Pacific partners. The other is with North Carolina State University and Rutgers focusing on strengthening pathways for middle and high school students interested in the intersection of traditional medicine and western science.

We hope to see many of you at the International Congress of Circumpolar Health (ICCH15) to be held in Fairbanks August 5-10, 2012. There will be many opportunities for MPH alumni, faculty, and students to get involved in this international gathering. Visit http://icch15.com/ or contact me or other organizers for more information.

Drop a line when you get a chance. We love to hear from you.

Rhonda M. Johnson, DrPH, MPH, FNP
MPH Program Coordinator
Department Chair, Health Sciences
Rhonda.Johnson@uaa.alaska.edu
907-786-6545

Congratulations to the Delta Omega Honor Society Inductees!
The recently established Gamma Iota Chapter of the Delta Omega Honorary Society in Public Health at the University of Alaska Anchorage is pleased to announce its first alumni inductees. Each year, Delta Omega elects new student, faculty, alumni, and honorary members based on high academic standards and outstanding performance in scholarship, teaching, research, and community service.

This year’s inductees include: Kathy Anderson, MPH (2009); Vanessa Hiratsuka, MPH (2007); Tammy Zulz, MPH (2007); Kathy Allely, MPh (2008); and Kerry Pride, DVM, MPH (2009).

For more information about the Delta Omega Honor Society, visit the National Chapter’s web site at www.deltaomega.org.