

PERSPECTIVE

Spring 2010

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

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The Haitian Tragedy

School Launches Vital Trauma Counseling Initiatives

It's hard to comprehend the level of suffering in Haiti as the Caribbean nation struggles to rebound from the deadly January 12 earthquake. More than 200,000 people were killed, tens of thousands more lost an arm, a leg or sustained other crippling injuries, and an estimated 3 million Haitians at home and abroad experienced the loss of a loved one.

At the University of Miami, the tragedy resulted in an outpouring of relief donations, a campus-wide candle-light vigil, and a steady flow of student, faculty and staff volunteers – including medical teams led by doctors from the Miller School of Medicine – to help the survivors. "Throughout the country, people are sending help to Haiti," said Professor Guerda Nicolas, chair, Educational and Psychological Studies (EPS). "I hope that brings a long-lasting change of attitude since Haiti now faces a long period of recovery."

This spring, in collaboration with colleagues from other schools on campus, faculty members from the School of Education will focus on two distinct groups: Haitians living in South Florida who lost family and friends in the earthquake, and the medical and relief teams in Haiti who are providing physical

(story continues on next page)

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(from page one)

care for the quake survivors. “Miami has the largest community of Haitians living in the U.S., followed by New York,” said Nicolas. “We intend to work closely with the existing support infrastructure to assess the situation and provide appropriate interventions.”

Nicolas is collaborating with Erin N. Kobetz, M.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, Miller School of Medicine, to implement a project assessing the impact of the earthquake on the lives of Haitians living in South Florida. Leaders in the South Florida Haitian community feel strongly that the earthquake could negatively impact the health and well being of Little Haiti residents. Many have suffered significant personal losses and are without access to mental health and other

social services. In response to this concern, an assessment was launched that aims to survey 1000 residents of Little Haiti about their earthquake experiences, focusing particularly on related emotional and psychological issues. The intent of

this survey is to inform future community-based efforts to help Little Haiti recover now and to thrive in the future. A series of forums will be held at various community venues to solicit feedback about the best strategies for responding to any issues emerging from the survey effort.

Said Nicolas, a native of Haiti who lost nine family members in the quake, “Our goal is to help rebuild lives, families and communities. In doing so, we have to be sensitive to the Haitian culture, which is different in many ways from U.S. society.”

In recent network news appearances on CNN, CSNBC, Bloomberg and other national programs, Nicolas has emphasized the importance of cultural awareness in understanding events in Haiti. “If you don’t know the cultural framework, it’s difficult to report the news accurately,” she said.

For instance, Haitians generally will not break down and cry in front of an outsider – even if they lost a spouse or children in the quake, Nicolas said. “A TV viewer in the U.S. might consider a mother uncaring, when she is actually doing her grieving in private with her family and neighbors.”

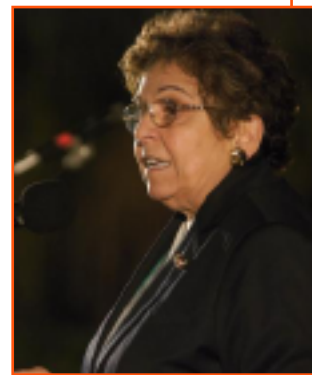
Many Haitians are also uncomfortable with the concept of amputation, added Nicolas, citing the case of a young man who had lost a leg and felt like he would never be whole again. “In terms of psychological trauma, Haitians tend to experience things in terms of their bodies,” she added. “They might talk about a sense of emptiness or “gaz” inside, while someone from the U.S. might have bad dreams or recurrent nightmares. But counseling and support can have a powerful impact on people, regardless of how the symptoms of trauma manifest themselves.”

“We are taking an existing trauma measure, translating it to Creole, and making the necessary cultural adaptations for our local community,” said Nicolas. “Then, we will train grassroots workers from the community to conduct the assessment and help us formulate our long-term plans for assistance.”

To maximize the School’s ability to counsel quake survivors in Haiti, Nicolas and Victoria Behar Metrani, Ph.D., Professor, School of Nursing and Health Studies, are using a “train the trainer” strategy. The goal is to give medical and relief teams in Haiti the tools to counsel traumatized patients and family members, while dealing with their own personal stresses.

Nicolas will be going to Haiti in March for a first-hand assessment before launching the counseling assessment and intervention program in May. “One of the initial issues for medical personnel is recognizing whether a patient has been traumatized or not. Therefore, the School plans to provide training for approximately 150 medical personnel in Haiti. Approximately 25 of those professionals will receive additional in-depth training on conducting full mental health assessments.

In addition, the School’s faculty members and counseling students will be incorporated into an interdisciplinary team that will provide supportive group therapy to those patients, as well as medical personnel and staffers. “We hope to raise awareness of these important mental health issues,” Nicolas said, “while building capacity within Haiti to provide support to traumatized survivors.”



Images from the UM candlelight vigil and community forum on Haiti.

(Above) Guerda Nicolas.

dean's message

Stepping Outside the Box

At the School of Education, we believe that a coordinated approach is essential to address the troubling issues facing our society today. From combating childhood obesity to counseling parents and families to improving teachers' skills, our School is reaching out to build exciting and effective new partnerships.



Professor Guerda Nicolas, a native of Haiti, we are providing valuable skills and support using a strategy designed to multiply our contributions and build sustainable counseling programs in the devastated Caribbean nation.

Closer to home, our new Dunspaugh-Dalton Foundation Community and Educational Well-Being (CEW) Research Center is fostering dynamic new partnerships between our faculty and South Florida community organizations, while adding to our knowledge base and offering new resources for U.S. and international scholars focusing on these vital topics.

With the support of two generous donors, our School of Education is working to strengthen the academic programs offered by the many Jewish day schools in our region. Through workshops, seminars and other professional development activities, we are building teacher skills and helping a new generation of Jewish students.

Our School of Exercise and Sport Sciences is also actively building partnerships, including health-promoting initiatives with the University of Miami's Miller School of Medicine, as well as leading medical centers and gerontology centers serving our region.

By breaking through the traditional walls of academia, our School is striving to improve individual, family, and community well-being. We invite you to partner with us in building a strong and healthy society for future generations.

Dean Isaac Prilleltensky

Erwin and Barbara Mautner Chair in Community Well-Being

Rather than simply "thinking outside the box," we are stepping outside the four walls of the classroom, the counseling office, and the athletic training room and into the community.

Driven by our vision to be a center of excellence for mental, physical and educational well-being in multicultural settings, we are actively engaging academic, business, and civic leaders locally and around the world.

This issue of Perspective provides several clear examples of how our School is bringing that vision to life. Our cover feature shows how our Department of Educational and Psychological Studies is taking a lead role in providing trauma counseling to victims of the Haitian earthquake. Under the leadership of



About Our Mark

The School of Education's symbol represents our collective focus on well-being as the core of our mission. The interlocking arcs stand for three basic components of well-being: the intellectual, emotional, and physical. These three components correspond to the three departments in our school, which are interrelated in their focus on well-being.

The University of Miami School of Education is organized into three departments:

- Teaching and Learning (TAL), which fosters intellectual and educational development
- Educational and Psychological Studies (EPS), which focuses on emotional health and psychological factors
- Exercise and Sport Sciences (ESS), which promotes physical wellness, fitness, and sport

"Rather than simply 'thinking outside the box,' we are stepping outside the four walls of the classroom, the counseling office, and the athletic training room and into the community." – Dean Isaac Prilleltensky

School's New Research Center Advances Community Well-Being

Identifying the most effective strategies for advancing community well-being and disseminating those research findings to a worldwide audience are among the primary goals of the School of Education's new Dunspaugh-Dalton Foundation Community and Educational Well-Being (CEW) Research Center.

Led by founding director Professor Etiony Aldarondo, Associate Dean for Research, the CEW Research Center provides support for interdisciplinary research, fosters university-community collaborations, and creates innovative education and training programs. "We have begun the process of creating a forum that will serve as a bridge between our School and the U.S. and international audience interested in building healthy, strong, and sustainable communities," said Aldarondo.

Located in the University's Max Orovitz Building, the 10,000-square-foot center provides space for the School's rapidly growing research program. "For the first time, we have a facility where our research teams can operate as a whole with the support of graduate assistants and lead investigators," said Aldarondo. "Our new center strengthens the capacity of our investigators to work at the highest possible level."

One example is the ongoing work by Professor Okhee Lee, Department of Teaching and Learning, to improve science teaching in the classroom. Her recent five-year study, "Promoting Science among English Language Learners (P-Sell)" found that students in six Miami-Dade elementary schools who received hands-on instruction achieved higher scores on state assessment tests.

Aldarondo said the center also provides support for pilot faculty research initiatives with potential for future funding. For example,



Dr. Etiony Aldarondo and Dean Isaac Prilleltensky

staffers can assist with writing grant proposals, and graduate students at the center can conduct reviews of related literature.

Thanks to a Southwest Airlines sponsorship, the center also supports faculty travel that aligns with the School's mission. "Southwest found that our research center would be an appropriate use of their community support resources," Aldarondo said, "since we are focusing on advancing community well-being." The center also provides funding for outside speakers and professional development workshops.

Another major goal is to match the talent and resources of the School's faculty with the needs of community agencies that are working to promote education and community well-being. "In the past, many of our faculty members provided support on their own," said Aldarondo. "Now, we have institutionalized that 'matching' process. To facilitate research initiatives, we also help

community organizations prepare for partnerships with our researchers, who have specific needs for data, protocols, and other structural aspects of a study."

With assistance from Professor Eugene Provenzo, Department of Teaching and Learning, the CEW Research Center is also developing a series of tools that will help promote community well-being to a worldwide audience.

"With funding from the Richter Libraries, we are developing a community well-being portal that will provide people outside the university with access to the interdisciplinary materials that constitute the base of knowledge for the emerging field of education and community well-being," said



Aldarondo Honored

On January, 22, Dr. Etiony Aldarondo, Associate Dean for Research, presented the keynote address at a conference on University-Community Partnerships for Diversity and Social Justice at the University of Minnesota. He was also honored with the Social Justice and Scholarship Award given by the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community (IDVAAC) and the School of Social Work at the University of Minnesota in recognition of longstanding commitment, leadership, and contribution to scholarship and clinical practice that increases awareness of social justice challenges and their solutions in disadvantaged communities across the country.

Aldarondo. “We believe it is essential to provide quick access to the latest research findings relating to public health, community psychology, language and literacy, prevention, and other topics.”

Founded by a donation from the Dunspaugh-Dalton Foundation, the center’s mission is to promote well-being in individuals, relationships, organizations, and communities through interdisciplinary research, university-community partnerships, educational and leadership training, and consultation services.

As Dean Isaac Prilleltensky said, “Through our new center, our School will carry out much needed research and programs to help us achieve our mission of promoting a more integrated, holistic way of nurturing educators and members of the community.”

Reaching Out to Jewish Educators



(Top) Participants analyze currency in the "International Currency Exchange."

(Center) Professor Anita Meinbach, left, Marci Wiseman Director, Educational Resources, Center for the Advancement of Jewish Education, and Professor Robert Moore.

(Bottom) Professor Robert Moore leads discussion of classroom management strategies at February 1 workshop at Greater Miami Jewish Federation office.

Susan Novak, a teacher at Temple Beth Am Day School in Miami, appreciates the School of Education's new outreach program for Jewish educators. Calling a recent workshop on classroom management strategies a "wonderful overview," Novak said, "As an educator, it is important for me to reflect on my own classroom practices. The workshop allowed me to examine what I do and where I can implement some changes."

Through the new Jack and Harriet Rosenfeld Foundation Program in Jewish Education, the School of Education is providing workshops, seminars and other opportunities to support and enhance learning in Jewish day schools throughout South Florida, which is the nation's second largest Jewish population center.

"Our two main objectives are to strengthen methodology based on the latest theory and research and to help educators connect Judaic heritage with curriculum," said Professor Anita Meinbach, Department of Teaching and Learning and director of the foundation program. "Our hope is to help establish a national model for Jewish education that is dynamic, rigorous, and innovative to meet the challenges of our times – a model that will inspire students and teachers and enhance entire communities."

Last fall, the School launched its new program with its first seminar, "Critical and Creative Thinking: Building a Better Mousetrap," for administrators and teachers in Miami-Dade and Broward County Jewish day schools. Anne Della Camera, a career educator and teacher trainer, facilitated the workshop, which actively engaged participants in problem-solving activities, writing simulated journals and analyzing world currency in the "International Currency Exchange."

Celia Isaacs, a teacher at David Posnack Hebrew Day School, said, "This workshop got the creative side of me excited by reminding me to do the fun learning experiences and forget the workbook pages." Another teacher, Melissa Kol from Temple Kol Ami Emanu-El Day School, added that the workshop gave her more ideas for having children work together to foster critical thinking.

Professor Robert Moore, Department of Teaching and Learning, led the program's second workshop, "Classroom Management: Strategies for the Inclusive Classroom," on February 1 at the Greater Miami Jewish Federation office. More than 50 teachers and administrators attended, representing 12 different schools.

Moore spoke on how teachers can prevent behavior problems and help their students develop pro-social skills. "We also need to help students take more responsibility for their own learning," he said. "Classroom management is not just discipline," he said. "It's reaching students, engaging them with activities, and helping them take more responsibility for their own learning."

Moore added that a positive approach to discipline can produce results without interrupting the instructional process. The goal is to manage the classroom effectively without "shutting down" student learning.

"Every teacher struggles to some degree with classroom management," said Dr. Roni Raab, head,

"As an educator, it is important for me to reflect on my own classroom practices. The workshop allowed me to examine what I do and where I can implement some changes."

– Susan Novak

Rabbi Alexander S. Gross (RASG) Hebrew Academy, Miami Beach. "By expanding their knowledge, this workshop provided extra tools for them to use in their day-to-day teaching."

Meinbach is now collaborating with the Center for Advancement of Jewish Education (C.A.J.E.), representatives of local area Jewish day schools, and the faculty of the School of Education to provide follow-up leadership workshops involving visioning and strategic planning.

Joe Signorile: A 'Supercharged' Strategy for Life-Long Fitness



When Arthur Agatston, M.D., cardiologist, and professor at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine wanted to add an exercise component to his best-selling "South Beach Diet" books, he turned to Professor Joe Signorile, Department of Exercise and Sport Sciences, for assistance.

Drawing on the lessons from his numerous research studies on fitness training programs for people of all ages, Signorile developed an interval training program with a gradual build-up in intensity to reduce any potential for injury, while matching the nutrition and dietary cycle. The resulting book, "South Beach Diet Supercharged" became another New York Times bestseller.

"By eating healthy foods and staying fit, you can live a high quality of life, be happier, and maintain your independence into old age," said Signorile. "What we're trying to do is develop exercise programs that are feasible for most people and more palatable to individuals who don't exercise now."

Since joining the School in 1989, Signorile has published more than 50 articles and book chapters, 100 abstracts, and made numerous presentations at scientific meetings.

He also serves as senior researcher at the Stein Gerontological Institute, Miami Jewish Home and Hospital for the Aged, and research health science specialist for the Miami VA Medical Center. His recent articles include "Differential increases in average isokinetic power by specific muscle groups of older women due to variations in training and testing" in the Journal of Gerontology; "A comparative electromyographical investigation of muscle utilization patterns using various hand positions during the lat pulldown" in the Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research; and "Resistance training for power, strength, and functionality: a long-term prescription" in the American Journal of Medicine and Sport.

Currently, Signorile is undertaking three major lines of research, utilizing the advanced technology of the department's Laboratory of Clinical and Applied Physiology. The first study focuses on the potential for accelerating fitness training by using vibratory plates. "The concept is to stimulate the body's neuromuscular system through vibrations," said Signorile. "By vibrating the subject's whole body, we have found that flexibility in older individuals can be increased more rapidly, compared with standard stretching practices."

A second study is underway on whether caloric output can be increased by using a vibratory plate instead of a standard resistance exercise. Early findings indicate that oxygen consumption increases in younger subjects when they exercise on a vibratory plate. "Now we're looking at the elderly and the obese," Signorile said. "Our hope is that people who are not ready to get on a treadmill

Danish Students Visit the School of Education's Department of Exercise and Sport Sciences

*D*uring the fall 2009 semester, a group of students from the Sonderborg Sport School in Denmark visited the School's Department of Exercise and Sport Sciences. The students, led by Peter Lindum, came to Miami to learn about academics in the U.S. and to gain a first-hand experience of the American college student lifestyle. The visit was part of the department's ongoing effort to establish international relations with similar programs around the world.



or do circuit training may still benefit from this approach, which can burn more calories in a shorter time with less perceived exertion.”

Another study uses a periodic acceleration bed that moves the body up toward the head and then back toward the feet. Subjects experience an increase in nitric oxide, a vasodilator that opens the body’s blood vessels. Signorile believes the metabolic results can reduce muscle soreness after a workout and speed the body’s recovery. “This approach may be beneficial for elite athletes during training, for patients in rehabilitation after an injury, and for others who need to increase their level of physical activity without risking muscle damage,” he said.

Signorile is a member of the University’s Research Council and the Graduate School Committee for Doctoral Curriculum Evaluation. He sits on the School’s Academic and Student Services Committee, and Technology Committee. He is also a member of the American College of Sports Medicine, the American Physiological Society, and the National Strength and Conditioning Association.

Recent Publications

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