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# The University of Georgia

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Franklin College of Arts and Sciences  
*Department of Speech Communication*

February 3, 2006

Provost Arnett C. Mace  
Office of Provost  
University of Georgia  
203 Administration Bldg.  
Athens, GA 30602

Dear Provost Mace:

I have attached a proposal for a Health and Risk Communication Center at the University of Georgia to be submitted to the University Curriculum Committee at its next meeting on February 17th. I have discussed this proposal with David Lee and he has expressed his support in an attached letter. I also have letters of support from Deans of the Grady College, the College of Public Health, and the College of Education. We anticipate getting a letter of support from the Dean of Arts and Sciences as soon as she returns from her international trip.

Please let me know if I can provide any additional information you might need. Thank you for your assistance with this proposal.

Sincerely yours,

Vicki S. Freimuth, Ph.D.  
Professor, Speech Communication Department and Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication

**A Proposal to Establish a**

**UGA Health and Risk Communication Center**

**February, 2006**

Submitted to University Council Curriculum Committee

Interim Steering Committee:

Celeste Condit, Speech Communication  
\*Vicki Freimuth, Speech Communication and Grady  
College of Journalism and Mass Com  
Dean Krugman, Advertising & Public Relations  
Don Rubin, Speech Communication and Language &  
Literacy Education  
Jeff Springston, Advertising & Public Relations

\* primary contact: Vicki Freimuth, 2-0586, freimuth@uga.edu

## **Rationale for the Center**

Health communication as an area of theory, research, and practice, focuses on the relationship between communication and health, health attitudes and beliefs, and health behavior. Risk communication specifically focuses on the way receivers assess threats and make decisions about their own choices. Developing a Health and Risk Communication Center (HRCC) at the University of Georgia will create a mechanism to foster interdisciplinary interaction and a point of contact for external interactions with funding agencies, other institutions, and the wider biomedical and public health community. The nucleus of this center already exists with considerable cross-departmental research activities currently underway, major funding in place, a curriculum contemplated for the Masters of Public Health degree program, space allocated in the newly constructed Coverdell Building, and donor contributions to augment equipment and furnishings for the new Center. Given its interdisciplinary nature and research focus, the Center will report directly to the Vice President for Research.

Internally, the creation of the Health and Risk Communication Center is a continuation of developments already underway to support interdisciplinary research in the biomedical and health sciences at UGA. This Center adds a specialized focus in the University's overall biomedical and public health research strategy.

Anticipated membership in HRCC will include faculty from at least the following departments and programs: Advertising and Public Relations, Center for Latino Advancement, Economics, Health Administration/Policy, Health Behavior and Promotion, Journalism, Pharmacy, Toxicology, Sociology, and Speech Communication. In addition, it is anticipated that faculty in the Medical College of Georgia's Departments of Family Medicine and Psychiatry and Health Behavior will participate, as will health care providers from the Athens/Northeast Georgia Region. A list of potential affiliates of the Center is attached.

## **Background**

As we enter the Twenty-First Century, social scientists and health strategists have noted a number of important trends:

- The resistance of certain particularly egregious social and public health problems including AIDS, drug and tobacco abuse, domestic and public violence, teen pregnancy, obesity and others to respond to traditional public health strategies.
- The increasing diversification of the population—where diversification can be defined demographically, psychologically and behaviorally.

- An appreciation of the role of healthy lifestyles and a resulting recognition of the need for effective mass and interpersonal communication strategies to inform, persuade, and mobilize citizens.
- Confusion about healthful practices and in many cases resistance to learning about such practices on the part of citizens who are increasingly confronted with poorly planned and often conflicting health messages.
- Continuing development of a sophisticated and highly integrated communication infrastructure making possible innovative approaches to marketing communication that specifically and narrowly target social groups at greatest risk and in greatest need of relevant health and behavioral information.
- A growing recognition of federal agencies within the Public Health Service that the future of public health practice will have at its core communication in its myriad forms.

The confluence of these trends has resulted in the need for an academic and service program which integrates a burgeoning body of theory and research in communication studies and social marketing with the challenges posed by a multitude of threats to the public's health and welfare. The Health and Risk Communication Center, headquartered at the University of Georgia, would meet this need.

## **Goals for the Center**

The Center is being designed to address the following goals:

1. To advance knowledge in the fields of health and risk communication.
2. To enhance the University of Georgia's reputation for excellence in health communication and, in particular, to position the University of Georgia as an international leader in public health communication theory, research and practice within five years.
3. To develop and test social marketing strategies which are particularly suitable for contributing to the health of traditionally underserved populations including African-Americans and low income urban and rural populations.
4. To become an information resource for local, state, and national media organizations reporting on various health issues.
5. To serve the public health professional community by offering state-of-the-art advice and training on appropriate communication strategies and tactics for various public health problems.

## **Proposed Center Activities**

To attain the stated goals, the Center will engage in the following activities:

- Train M.P.H. students and practicing health professionals through residence programs as well as through collaborations with other health profession institutions in the state.
- Conduct research integrating theory and application.
- Conduct successful grant-seeking programs.
- Evaluate communication-based public health interventions.
- Offer technical assistance to public health practitioners on health communication program design and implementation.
- Serve as a resource to media organizations.
- Organize distinguished forums for information exchange among academics, public health practitioners, and media professionals.

Other long-term objectives for the Center include the establishment of a health message testing service, and the development of doctoral and post-graduate training programs in public health communication.

## **Governance**

The University of Georgia Health and Risk Communication Center will report directly to the Vice President for Research. The governance structure of the HRCC includes the following participants: the Director, the Executive Committee, Staff Investigators, Affiliated Faculty, and the Advisory Board.

### *Center Director*

The Director reports to and serves at the discretion of the Vice President for Research and will be reviewed within the established review process of OVPR. The Director will preside over meetings of the Executive Committee, Staff Investigators, Affiliated Faculty, and the Board of Advisors.

### *The Executive Committee*

The Executive Committee will consist of the Director and four staff investigators elected from the full body of the staff investigators, one representative from graduate

and post doctoral fellows, and one staff representative. Staggered terms of the Executive Committee members shall be for three years, with no limit to the number of terms an individual may serve. This group shall assist the Director in making day to day decisions and in evaluating applications for Center membership.

#### *Staff Investigators*

Health and Risk Communication Center Staff Investigators will be UGA faculty actively involved in research/education/service in health and risk communication fields and who participate in activities of the Center. The designation, Staff Investigator, was chosen because it is the standard term used by federal agencies for faculty who participate in research center activities. Any member of the UGA faculty, including emeritus faculty, adjunct faculty, and Academic Professionals or Research Scientists, may apply to become a Staff Investigator of the Center by submitting a current curriculum vitae and a letter describing what she or he hopes to gain from participating in the Center, as well as what she or he will contribute to the Center's programs. In light of the special status of the collaborative relationship between MCG and UGA, encouraged by the Board of Regents and the Presidents of the two institutions, MCG faculty will also be eligible to become Staff Investigators. Staff Investigators will serve five-year terms, after which time they may again apply for appointment. Decisions for acceptance will be made by the sitting Executive Committee with consent by the Board of Advisors. Grants activity shall be one factor taken into consideration in selecting Staff Investigators. It is expected that all Staff Investigators will be actively involved in health and risk communication research/education/service in some manner and will serve in some capacity that benefits the Center as a whole.

#### *Affiliated Faculty*

Affiliated Faculty will be those UGA and MCG faculty members whose research/education/service interests relate less directly to health and risk communication than those of the Staff Investigators, but who are interested in contributing to the programs of the Center. Any member of the UGA faculty may apply to become an Affiliated Faculty by submitting a current curriculum vitae and a letter that describes what she or he hopes to gain from participating in the Center and what she or he will contribute to the Center's programs. Decisions for acceptance will be made by the Executive Committee, in consultation with the Board of Advisors.

#### *Board of Advisors*

The Board of Advisors will consist of a panel of individuals from both the University and the surrounding community. These individuals will include a representative each from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Georgia State Health Department, St. Mary's Healthcare Corporation, the Athens Regional Medical Center, the Medical College of Georgia, the Georgia Medical Association, and at least one representative of an allied health professional organization. The Director of the BHSI, or other designee of the Vice President for Research, will also sit on the Advisory Board. The Board of Advisors will assist the Director and

Executive Committee in achieving the missions of the Health and Risk Communication Center. Members of the Board of Advisors will be nominated by the Staff Investigators and appointed by the sitting Executive Committee and will serve three-year terms.

## **Funding**

Space for the Center is included in the plans for the newly completed Coverdell Building. Substantial funds to augment equipment and furnishings have been contributed by a corporate donor. Resources for staff and operation during the initial three years come from a Center of Excellence for Health Marketing/Health Communication grant from CDC. Future funding is anticipated from the continuation of the current funding as well as development of additional funding sources. Strategic development of the Center will be accomplished under the authority of the Vice President for Research.

# **Faculty Who Have Indicated Intention to Affiliate with Georgia Health and Risk Communication Center**

## **College of Arts and Sciences**

### **Department of Speech Communication**

Kevin Barge, Associate Professor  
Celeste Condit, Professor  
Vicki Freimuth, Professor  
Tina Harris, Associate Professor  
Jennifer Monahan, Associate Professor  
Don Rubin, Professor  
Lijang Shen, Assistant Professor

### **Department of Sociology**

Linda Grant, Professor  
Leigh Willis, Assistant Professor

### **Department of Psychology**

Gail Williamson, Professor

## **College of Journalism and Mass Communication**

### **Department of Advertising and Public Relations**

Karen King, Professor  
Dean Krugman, Professor  
Wendy Macias, Assistant Professor  
Hye-Jin Paek, Assistant Professor  
Jeff Springston, Associate Professor  
Pat Thomas, Professor

## **College of Public Health**

### **Department of Health Promotion and Behavior**

Pam Orpinas, Associate Professor  
Mark Wilson, Professor

### **Department of Health Administration**

Bob Galen, Professor

## **College of Business**

### **Economics Department**

David Mustard, Associate Professor

## **College of Education**

### **Lifelong Education, Administration & Policy**

Lorilee Sandmann, Associate Professor

### **Center for Latino Achievement & Success in Education**

Paul Matthews, Academic Professional





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# The University of Georgia

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Office of Vice President for Research

January 30, 2006

Dr. Vicki Freimuth  
Speech Communications  
0134 Terrell Hall  
CAMPUS

Dr. Donald Rubin  
Speech Communications  
0134 Terrell Hall  
CAMPUS

Dear Drs. Freimuth and Rubin:

I write to confirm my support for your request to establish the UGA Health and Risk Communication Center with a direct reporting line to my office. I think this is a legitimately interdisciplinary initiative and that it will lead to significant research opportunities and outcomes.

As I mentioned during our discussion, there appear to be real opportunities for your center to interact productively with other programs on campus, and I particularly appreciated your plan to partner with the College of Public Health in instruction. Let's hope these kinds of partnerships also lead to enhanced extramural funding prospects.

Good luck as you move this program forward.

Sincerely,

David Lee, Ph.D  
Vice President for Research

DCL/gm



# The University of Georgia

Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication

January 30, 2006

Provost Arnett C. Mace  
Office of the Senior Vice President for  
Academic Affairs and Provost  
Administration Building  
University of Georgia  
Campus

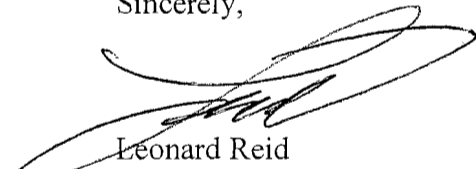
Dear Provost Mace:

I am writing to enthusiastically support the proposal for a Health and Risk Communication Center at the University of Georgia. Several of our Grady faculty and graduate students currently are doing research on health and risk communication subjects. In fact, the development of the health communication area is one of the top priorities in Grady's five year plan.

Dean Krugman and Jeff Springston from our college have been working for several years with a group of interdisciplinary scholars to develop a research agenda and grant proposals in this area. These efforts were very successful with the award this fall from the CDC for a Center of Excellence in Health Marketing/Health Communication. Last year we added more strength to this area by bringing Pat Thomas to the Grady College as the Knight Chair in Health and Medical Journalism. Additionally, we have a number of other faculty who conduct and publish health communication research.

I believe the proposed Center is a critical step to formalize interdisciplinary relationships and showcase the strength we have in the health and risk communication area at the University of Georgia.

Sincerely,



Leonard Reid  
Interim Dean and Professor



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# The University of Georgia

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College of Public Health  
*Dean's Office*

February 1, 2006

Dr. Arnett C. Mace, Jr.  
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost  
203 Administration Building  
University of Georgia  
Athens, GA 30602-1651

Dear Dr. Mace:

I want to express support for the proposed Health and Risk Communication Center at the University of Georgia. Health and risk communication are important areas of research to the College of Public Health. Within the MPH degree, we plan to offer students a focus in health communication as part of the Health Promotion and Behavior concentration area. Moreover our students in environmental health benefit from the study of risk communication. The University of Georgia has considerable strength in these areas across several colleges. This center will provide a focal point for collaboration and a way to showcase this scholarship for external groups. There are opportunities for funding in these areas. Both the National Cancer Institute and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have current initiatives in communication and both have funded Centers of Excellence in Communication. As you know the University of Georgia already has been designated as a CDC Center of Excellence in Health Communication.

We believe that establishing such a center at UGA will strengthen the College of Public Health. We expect that several of our faculty will affiliate with the center.

Sincerely yours,

Phillip L. Williams  
Interim Dean and Professor

✓cc: Dr. Vicki S. Freimuth, Speech Communication



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# The University of Georgia

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Franklin College of Arts and Sciences  
*Office of the Dean*

February 6, 2006

Curriculum Committee  
University Council  
University of Georgia  
CAMPUS

Dear Curriculum Committee members:

I write to give my enthusiastic support to the proposed UGA Health and Risk Communication Center.

We live in an age plagued by natural disasters of immense magnitude and by the specter of rapidly spreading pandemics. Yet at the same time, available advances in medicine and technology offer unprecedented promise of improved health status for all. To achieve that promise, there can be no doubt that research and development in communication for health protection demands the highest of priorities. Franklin College faculty are already in the forefront of research on health and risk communication. The proposed UGA Health and Risk Communication Center promises to further advance such crucial scholarship in the College and throughout the University. It will build on existing capacities at our institution and help attract additional resources to augment those strengths.

I therefore urge adoption of the proposed UGA Health and Risk Communication Center.

Sincerely,

Garnett Stokes  
Dean



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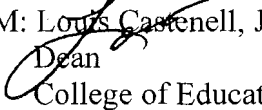
# The University of Georgia

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College of Education  
*Office of the Dean*

DATE: February 1, 2006

TO: University Council Curriculum Committee

FROM:  Louis Castenell, Jr.  
Dean  
College of Education

SUBJECT: Proposed UGA Health and Risk Communication Center

Effective disease prevention and treatment, as well as response to emergency conditions, all rest on a foundation of communication. Many faculty and staff in the College of Education conduct research, teaching, and service in support of various elements of health and risk communication. The proposed UGA Health and Risk Communication Center promises to facilitate collaboration between these faculty and their colleagues pursuing similar work throughout the University.

The proposed UGA Health and Risk Communication Center will enhance current College of Education programs and help initiate new ones. For example, a number of current projects in the college tie to the purposes of this proposal including a project recently funded by the Office of the Vice President for Public Service and Outreach involving our Center for Latino Achievement and Success to establish culturally and linguistically relevant health information kiosks for Georgia's immigrant Latinos. Our work with the Center for Disease Control and the Shepherd Center is also relevant.

On behalf of the College of Education, I strongly endorse the vision for a UGA Health and Risk Communication Center as articulated in the document which this letter accompanies.