

Oberhelman named associate dean for global health and will hold chair in honor of past president

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[Dr. Richard Oberhelman](#), a long-time professor at the Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, has been named associate dean for global health by Dean

Thomas LaVeist.

“Richard has been working in the global sphere for the entirety of his career,” said LaVeist. “He’s shepherded our students into global roles and truly understands the public health landscape on a global scale. Our work at this school has always been global and Richard will help to harness that work in a way that will create new opportunities and expand existing relationships.”

Oberhelman will also become the Margaret W. and Eamon M. Kelly Distinguished Chair in International Development. Dr. Eamon Kelly was president of Tulane University from 1981 to 1998, the founder of Tulane’s Payson Center in International Development, and a professor at the school from 2015 until his passing in 2017. He was noted for many accomplishments over his long career, but the central passion of his academic work was in helping improve living conditions in African countries.

“I am thrilled and humbled to have the honor of holding an endowed chair with the name of former Tulane President Eamon Kelly,” said Oberhelman. “Dr. Kelly was a true leader and an inspiration for me and many others at Tulane. He was also a trailblazer in international collaborations for health and development, and I’m so happy that his legacy and work to improve the well-being of all people will continue through this new endowed chair, reinforcing our partnership with collaborators and Tulane alumni around the world, who are many. My new role as associate dean for global health is an exciting opportunity to follow Dr. Kelly’s example and engage our alumni network around the world, explore opportunities for joint programs with international partners, and expand our global health research programs.”

Richard Oberhelman earned his medical degree from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School in 1981 and joined Tulane in 1990. After serving as director of the Master of Public Health and Tropical Medicine program for over 15 years, he was named chair of the Department of Tropical Medicine, a role he held for two years. He would again be called to the chair role in 2012 to lead the Department of Global Community Health and Behavioral Sciences (GCHB), which included faculty, staff, and programs from the former Departments of Community Health Sciences and International Health and Development, the latter group joining the GCHB Department in 2014. Oberhelman will step down as GCHB chair at the end of June and return to the Department of Tropical Medicine.

Oberhelman is a board-certified pediatrician and a pediatric infectious disease specialist, as well as an ASTMH-certified specialist in clinical tropical medicine and traveler's health. He has more than 30 years of experience in applied and clinical child health research with collaborations in Peru, Argentina, Kenya, and Cambodia. His particular research interests cover diarrheal diseases, tuberculosis, and newborn sepsis with an emphasis on translational methods to detect, treat, or prevent these conditions. He also serves as the director of the Tulane Office of Global Health, a university-wide center to foster interdisciplinary, collaborative research opportunities across Tulane University and to promote global health research training opportunities for Tulane students.

Oberhelman has led several key global health training programs over the past decade and a half. The Minority Health International Research Training (MHIRT) program, which began in 2005, was this year rebranded as the Tulane Program to Advance Representation in Minority Health Research (Tulane ARMHR). The program provides mentored research training experiences in biomedical, behavioral, and social sciences to graduate students from underrepresented minority groups. He leads several training programs sponsored by the Fogarty International Center at NIH, including "Enabling Infectious Disease Research Capacity in the Peruvian Amazon," a program to expand the local public health and infectious diseases workforce in an important epicenter for tropical disease research, as well as co-directing the Tulane site for the UJMT Consortium of the Global Health Fellows and Scholars Program. The Global Health Fellows Program supports several doctoral and post-doctoral trainees from Tulane in collaborative, mentored global health research in low- and middle-income countries.

"As we emerge from the current coronavirus crisis, a tragic and instructive example of the critical importance of global health in our interconnected world, I look forward to working with our Tulane community and overseas alumni, supporters, and research partners to plan the next phase of our global health journey," Oberhelman says. "This is an exciting, critical moment in global health, and I hope to channel some of President Kelly's drive, optimism, and enthusiasm to help lead us forward."