

Gretchen Clum named interim chair of new department

|
Dee Boling dboling@tulane.edu

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On July 1, the Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine will unveil a new department, Social, Behavioral, and Population Sciences (SBPS), and [Dr. Gretchen Clum](#) will serve as interim chair.

The Department of Social, Behavioral, and Population Sciences is one of two departments formed from the Department of Global Community Health and Behavioral Sciences and will be comprised of a broad mix of public health social scientists working in New Orleans and around the world.

The department's central goal will be the advancement of health equity.

“The events of the past year, including a global pandemic significantly impacting communities of color and a consistent pattern of police violence against Black and Brown people, demonstrate the critical need for public health professionals with a thorough grounding in the behavioral, social, and structural underpinnings of health inequities,” said Dr. Thomas LaVeist, dean of the school and Weatherhead Presidential Chair in Health Equity. “Dividing GCHB into two distinct departments will give our students a more focused understanding of health as it relates to power, place, and history in the related areas they wish to study.”

Dr. Clum has been at SPHTM since 2005 and has focused her work on violence and traumatic stress, HIV, mental health, and health risk behaviors, particularly in women and adolescents. She has a current NIH grant focused on developing a mobile health intervention to improve mental health and adherence in violence affected people living with HIV. Clum teaches courses in maternal and child health, violence, and social and behavioral theory. She received her master’s and PhD from the University of Georgia in psychology.

“I am excited to work with our faculty, staff, students and community to advance health equity through social and behavioral science at this pivotal time in our history,” said Clum. “We will strive to make our new department a force in addressing health inequities and the social determinants of health through research, student training, and community engagement.”

The department will offer a new MPH program in social, behavioral, and population sciences, which will have a strong emphasis on social determinants of health and multi-level modes of health promotion, and training in social and behavioral methods. Students will be able to tailor their coursework to an area of interest, such as maternal and child health, sexual and reproductive health, health communication, nutrition, health equity, or violence. Clum will serve as director of the MPH in SBPS.

The department will also continue to offer master’s degrees in community health sciences, health education and communication, maternal and child health, and nutrition, as well as a doctoral degree in social, behavioral, and population sciences.