

New associate dean at Tulane Public Health will focus on public health practice and issues of diversity and inclusion

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Dr. [Thomas LaVeist](#), dean of the Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, announced today that Dr. Susan Cheng has become the school's first associate dean for public health practice and diversity, equity, and inclusion, effective September 1, 2021. According to LaVeist, Cheng will be charged with strategically building the school's portfolio of public health practice initiatives while also fulfilling the school's commitment to being a diverse, safe, and inclusive learning environment.

Cheng is also a clinical associate professor in the Department of Social, Behavioral, and Population Sciences, with a secondary appointment in the Department of Epidemiology.

"I am delighted to join the talented faculty and staff at Tulane University's School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine and humbled to be part of its impactful history as the first school of public health and an esteemed leader in the field," said Cheng. "Our communities face the impact of climate change, emerging diseases, and significant health disparities, which are further exacerbated by the social determinants of health. Our graduates enter a field full of great challenges and great opportunities. The investment we provide in hands-on public health practice, grounded in a solid understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion, will provide them with the skills to successfully advocate for their communities and serve as desperately needed public health leaders."

Under her leadership, Dr. Cheng recruited and mentored the most diverse Department of Public Health in Benedictine University's history, and she aims to continue her work at Tulane in creating a "dynamic, inclusive community that celebrates and welcomes the talents and vision of the most diverse School of Public Health in the country," she says. Dr. Cheng aims "to foster an academic home that promotes equitable recruitment, support, and advancement of individuals from BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, disabled, first generation, immigrant, and multicultural communities, who can thrive and succeed in a highly collaborative environment. All are welcome here at Tulane."

Cheng earned her doctorate in epidemiology from the University of California, San Diego and San Diego State University, and has been on faculty at Benedictine University since 2013. As chair of the Department of Public Health at Benedictine since 2015, Cheng managed residential and online programs, along with a partnership with Dalian Medical University in China. She led the department's CEPH

accreditation process and contributed to a number of university, local, and state-level committees and task forces around curriculum, COVID-19, racism and social justice, and more. LaVeist called her experience “a background that will lay the foundation for her success in this role at Tulane.”

Cheng also serves as lead epidemiologist for AB Med’s COVID-19 pandemic response projects. In this role, she worked with the California Rural Indian Health Board, the Navajo Nation, and the Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians on various testing, vaccine hesitancy, wastewater analysis, and preparedness efforts. For nearly 11 years she was the principal investigator and project manager for emergency preparedness resources for Native Americans.

“The substantial disparities in chronic and infectious disease, diseases of aging, and the impact of natural and manmade disasters, call on us to employ innovative, creative, and data-driven solutions,” says Cheng. “I look forward to working alongside our Tulane colleagues and students to create and effect positive change and advance social justice in our local and global communities. I am excited to be part of this chapter of Tulane and the SPHTM as we serve our communities and train our future leaders. I am honored to answer that call at Tulane.”