

Susan Cheng named distinguished fellow by National Academies of Practice

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David Gladow dgladow@tulane.edu

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Susan Cheng (back row, center) was recently inducted as a distinguished fellow of the new Public Health Academy at the National Academies of Practice (NAP) Annual Meeting.



Throughout her career, Associate Dean for Public Health Practice [W. Susan Cheng](#) has demonstrated a consistent commitment to the spirit of innovation and research-based solutions in crafting public policy and health care standards.

That dedication was recently recognized with Cheng being honored by being inducted as a distinguished fellow of the new Public Health Academy at the [National Academies of Practice \(NAP\) Annual Meeting](#) on March 13-15 in Washington D.C.

The NAP distinguished fellows recognize individuals with academic achievements such as significant and enduring educational and/or research contribution to practice. Honorees are judged by distinguished peers to have made significant and enduring contributions in their profession.

"I'm honored to be among the first inductees for public health," Cheng said. "I'm excited to be in a position to advocate for public health initiatives and for the field itself."

Before coming to the [Celia Scott Weatherhead School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine](#) at Tulane University, Cheng previously worked as an associate professor and department chair at the College of Science and Health at Benedictine University

in Illinois.

Her research agenda and practice activities at Benedictine were focused on maternal and child health, disaster preparedness and response, and mental health, improving health outcomes for individuals and communities. Cheng has been a contributing member of the executive council of the Illinois Public Health Association and chair of the Maternal and Child Health section since 2013. She also oversaw the PHA program residentially, online, and overseas, including the implementation of several new initiatives.

Prior to that, Cheng was an environmental health and safety specialist at the University of California-Davis, while also serving as the principal investigator, project manager, and epidemiologist for the Native American Alliance for Emergency Preparedness (NAAEP). The latter of those roles allowed Cheng to coordinate emergency (including pandemic) preparedness and health initiatives between federal, state, and local agencies, 105 tribes and reservations, and over 48 member Indian Health Clinics.

Here at Tulane University, Cheng is also the inaugural Murphy Institute Professor of Science Policy and Communication where she mentors doctoral fellows in translating science into accessible communications and actionable policy. Those roles helped prepare Cheng for this opportunity. And while becoming a scholar fellow is a distinct honor recognizing a career of significance, Cheng understands that the opportunity the fellowship presents is the more important piece.

As a fellow with the NAP, Cheng will become an active participant in joining the many outstanding healthcare leaders, practitioners, and advocates who work collaboratively as an interprofessional community to influence and promote national health policy, quality healthcare, and research.

Those conversations expect to take on added significance in the coming months. As government administrations change, so too does the healthcare landscape. But whatever becomes of the Affordable Healthcare Act or of other legislation that affects public health either indirectly or directly, Cheng believes her background in public health will bring a unique lens to the topics at hand.

“Maternal health challenges; how the Affordable Care Act might be altered or whether it might look different; whether prescription cost caps could get rolled back ... these are things we will have to monitor and be prepared to address,” Cheng said.

Fortunately, Cheng's student-centric approach to mentoring and providing experiential learning opportunities – as well as her experiences in policy and communications -- are a good fit for this distinguished fellows role.

And she sees collaboration continuing to be vital as public health evolves into the future.

“We're all stakeholders in public health. Whether you're talking about practitioners, academics, or members of the community, we all have a responsibility to ensure that all folks have the resources and opportunity to achieve optimal health and wellbeing.”