



# The HEHD Leading Edge

## HEHD Taking Lead Role to Reduce High-Risk Student Drinking

*Clemson One of 15 Collaborative Partners to Receive National Grant*

The College of Health, Education, and Human Development (HEHD) Department of Health Sciences is collaborating with the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) and other universities to study and subsequently form a tailored response to the issue of high-risk drinking among students. Clemson is one of 15 universities nationwide to be selected for participation in the NIAAA Rapid Response to College Drinking cooperative research project, a program to provide timely research and intervention to prevent or reduce alcohol-related problems among college students.

The project incorporates data on the specific high-risk drinking environments and peer influences unique to Clemson University into training and awareness programs that improve resistance to alcohol-related problems among first year students. During the first year of this three-year study the HEHD investigative team will conduct wide-ranging focus groups, interviews, and surveys while compiling university and community data on alcohol abuse and problems among first year students. The team is also using environmental scanning techniques to identify specific high-risk surroundings at the university that promote alcohol abuse among first year students. This data will be used in the second and third years of this project to provide intervention programs specifically tailored to high-risk demographics at Clemson University and will be part of an intervention program for first-year students who have committed an alcohol violation in their first semester. The intervention will create individualized, brief motivational enhancement approaches and cognitive-behavioral skills training to help students resist the influence of specific social, cultural and physical contexts associated with over indulgent drinking behaviors. By using current baseline data the investigative team plans to develop interventions that will be more effective in reducing alcohol abuse among students than the general "one size fits all" approach that currently seem to dominate alcohol abuse prevention programs.



The HEHD team managing this unprecedented research initiative and response program includes principal investigator Hugh D. Spitler, Associate Professor, Department of Public Health Sciences, co-principal investigator Martie Thompson, Associate Research Professor, Department of Public Health Sciences and co-investigator Cheryl Dye, Associate Professor, Department of Public Health Sciences. Each university receiving the Rapid Response grant is paired with a research partner institution along with program officers of the NIAAA. Clemson's Department of Health Science is partnered with Dr. Robert H. DuRant, a professor of public health sciences and vice chair of pediatrics at Wake Forest University School of Medicine. For more information about this topic please visit [www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov](http://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov).

## Childhood Research Helps Understand Importance of Early Experiences

*Secondary Data Provides Opportunities for Masters and Doctoral Programs*

As the importance of early childhood education and research gains national attention the HEHD School of Education continues to provide a very positive context for conducting interdisciplinary research, as a result improving the lives of young children, their families and future generations. Forming a collaborative relationship with the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), researchers from the School of Education have implemented the Clemson University Longitudinal Early Childhood Research Project and the HEHD Secondary Data Research Project. These projects utilize the large, secondary data set provided by the NCES project known as the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-1999 (ECLS-K).





The ECLS-K is a nationally representative sample of kindergartners, their teachers, and schools. Information is collected from children, their families, their teachers and their schools all across the United States. It is an ongoing study that focuses on children's early school experiences beginning with kindergarten and following children through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The study provides descriptive information on children's status at entry to school, their transition into school, and their progression through 12th grade. The longitudinal nature of the ECLS-K data enables researchers to study how a wide range of family, school, community, and individual factors are associated with school performance. The collected data includes variables on child development, home/school routines, child outcomes in the areas of math, reading, and general knowledge, curricula across school settings, health routines and indicators of the children and their parents, school district data, parent-report data, and cross-culture data.

The Clemson University Early Childhood Learning Research Project, directed by Dolores Stegelin, Ph.D., uses the vast amount of secondary data provided from the ECLS-K to fuel masters- and doctoral-level programs throughout several degree-granting units within the university. Subsequently, the knowledge gained from this research is disseminated on a national scale and implemented into programs that provide children a great chance of success throughout their lives and in parallel strengthen family and community ties. The HEHD Secondary Data Research Project brings together researchers in education, health, nursing, and related fields who wish to use large-scale, secondary data for research and scholarly publication. The well-conceived nature of this initiative promotes collaborative partnerships between many of the nurturing disciplines to promote healthy lifestyles and the importance of early childhood education while bringing to the forefront of national attention issues of health and educational disparities between differing socio-economic classes.



### **Clemson's EXPORT Center Waging War on SC Obesity, and Winning** *HEHD Program Targets Minority Health and Health Disparities*

As the EXPORT Center begins its third year of implementation, collaboration with regional and statewide partners has resulted in a number of significant outcomes since being funded by the National Institutes of Health, National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities in 2003. The Center, a partnership between Clemson University and Voorhees College located in Demark South Carolina, was funded to help reduce the burden of health disparities (differences in health outcomes in comparison to whites) experienced by SC racial/ethnic rural minority families and communities by addressing obesity as a primary risk factor for illness.

EXPORT Center Program Director, Dr. Shirley Timmons notes that "as the Center addresses the multifaceted problem of obesity in minority populations, there is supporting evidence that broadly targeted interventions may exacerbate the health disparities gap between disadvantaged and more advantaged groups as the latter may be more able to engage in community outreach intervention." Therefore, where possible, interventions prioritized by the Center are uniquely targeted as well as informed by the specific community that is the focus of the intervention.



The encouraging outcomes during the first two years of the initiative have focused on a) the promotion of healthy lifestyles that include regular physical activity along with smart eating habits as the most effective way to address obesity; b) establishing healthy eating and physical activity habits at a young age which can lead to healthy habits as adults, c) facilitating interventions based upon an engaged community, and d) fostering change at the individual, family, community, and societal levels.

For a more detailed and in-depth analysis of current outcomes relating to the EXPORT Center, along with highlights and news coming out of the College of Health, Education, and Human Development, please look for the winter edition of HEDHlines Magazine or visit us online at [www.hehd.clemson.edu](http://www.hehd.clemson.edu).