



COLUMBIA

MAILMAN SCHOOL
OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Stephen Smith Professor and Chair of Sociomedical Sciences
Columbia University, Mailman School of Public Health
New York, New York

THE SEARCH

The Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health invites nominations and applications for the role of Stephen Smith Professor and Chair of the Department of Sociomedical Sciences (SMS). One of the nation's leading departments focused on the social and structural determinants of health, SMS has built an international reputation for interdisciplinary scholarship, innovative education, and impactful research that advances public health theory, policy, and practice. Reporting directly to the Dean and serving as a member of the School's leadership team, the Chair will lead a department that is widely recognized for its contributions to understanding how social, cultural, economic, political, and environmental factors shape health and health equity and the development and evaluation of interventions that address these factors.

The next Chair will join the Department at a particularly exciting moment. As public health challenges become increasingly complex and interconnected, SMS is uniquely positioned to leverage its disciplinary breadth, methodological rigor, and longstanding commitment to community-engaged scholarship to drive innovation across research, education, and public health practice. Building on a distinguished history of intellectual leadership and societal impact, the Chair will have the opportunity to help shape the future of sociomedical science while contributing to the broader strategic priorities of Columbia Mailman and Columbia University.

The successful candidate will be a distinguished scholar and respected academic leader with a demonstrated record of scientific achievement, substantial extramural funding, and a commitment to advancing knowledge related to the social and structural determinants of health. They will bring an ability to build partnerships, foster interdisciplinary collaboration, support outstanding faculty and students, strengthen employee teams, and navigate the opportunities and challenges facing research-intensive academic institutions. Most importantly, the next Chair will recognize the unique strengths of sociomedical sciences and inspire the Department to continue advancing innovative scholarship that improves public health and informs policy and practice around the world.

The Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health is an equal opportunity, affirmative action employer. It has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to help with this recruitment.

Confidential inquiries, nominations, and applications may be submitted to Isaacson, Miller, as indicated at the end of this document.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1754, Columbia University in the City of New York encompasses 16 graduate and professional schools and enrolls over 9,000 undergraduates and 26,000 postgraduates. The University extends across three campuses in upper Manhattan: the Morningside Heights neighborhood, Manhattanville, and the Medical Center in Washington Heights. Called “the quintessential great urban university,” like the City of New York, it is diverse in every way: students come from all 50 states, over 90 foreign countries, and over half of undergraduates are from historically minoritized communities. More than 500 student organizations are offered, including 31 Division 1 Ivy League athletic teams and dozens of community service organizations, performance sections, political clubs, and publications. The renowned Columbia Core Curriculum unites all Columbia undergraduates by providing a common foundation in literature, philosophy, science, art, history, and music, and caps classes at 22 students to afford close interaction with Columbia's renowned faculty.

Columbia University Irving Medical Center (CUIMC) is situated on a 20-acre campus in Northern Manhattan and accounts for roughly half of Columbia University's nearly \$5 billion annual budget. The Medical Center provides global leadership in scientific research, health and medical education, and patient care. CUIMC includes the Columbia Mailman School of Public Health, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the College of Dental Medicine, and the School of Nursing, and has approximately 2,972 full-time faculty and more than 3,394 enrolled students, and 41 centers and institutes. With a long history of contributing to valuable discoveries and advances in science, health, and medicine, its faculty are leaders in initiatives that address the most pressing health issues of the day.

THE COLUMBIA MAILMAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Columbia Mailman is one of the three original graduate schools of public health in the nation. Established in 1922, the School is the third largest recipient of National Institutes of Health grants among schools of public health. The School's more than 1,200 Master's and 140 Doctoral students, and approximately 170 full-time faculty are highly global while locally committed—leading an agenda of research, education, and service to address the critical and complex public health issues affecting New Yorkers, the nation, and the world.

The departments of Biostatistics, Environmental Health Sciences, Epidemiology, Health Policy and Management, Population and Family Health, and Sociomedical Sciences offer students myriad opportunities to work closely with experts in a specialized field while connecting with peers with similar professional interests. The School is also home to three leading, interdisciplinary schoolwide research centers: ICAP (formerly: The International Center for AIDS Care and Treatment), the Center for Infection and Immunity, and the Robert N. Butler Columbia Aging Center. There are also more than 20 department-

based research centers, which provide a hub for specialized research innovation and opportunities for students to bridge classroom theory with real-world research, practice, and policy.

Columbia Mailman is respected as a leader in educational innovation in public health, combining state-of-the-art curricula with internationally renowned research and training programs, helping students become the world's future public health leaders. In 2010, the School launched a new Master's in Public Health (MPH) curriculum that focuses on a common core of interdisciplinary, case-based methods, skills, and aptitudes. Through interdisciplinary training, more hands-on experience in applying theory to practice, and a life-course perspective, this style of education has been met enthusiastically by students and employers. The curriculum has set a new standard for public health graduate education across the country, with many other schools adopting the approach in recent years. This year, Columbia Mailman has launched an initiative to modernize curricula by carefully incorporating artificial intelligence when it benefits students, improves education, and enhances faculty instruction.

Research at Columbia Mailman spans basic to intervention science. Scientific contributions are strong, as demonstrated through publication metrics. One-third of the School's research publications are among the world's most highly cited, and more than half of them are published in the world's top journals.

Located in Washington Heights in Northern Manhattan, Columbia Mailman is a long-standing and well-regarded partner in the local community and throughout New York City. Students complete applied practica in public and private organizations. Faculty members partner with community-based organizations to design community-based participatory research studies and leverage findings to partner with communities to build healthy lives and to advocate alongside the community for policy change. Members of the School community also volunteer locally to increase health literacy, strengthen health equity, expand the opportunities for careers in public health, and support the work of local organizations. Faculty and students partner with the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and work with diverse populations throughout the City's five boroughs to improve urban health in areas including, but not limited to, life-course approaches to lengthening health span and health in aging, reproductive health and rights, expanding access to health insurance and care, promoting healthy child development, disease prevention, environmental health, mental health, reducing gun violence, designing cities and workplaces to promote health and cohesion, pandemic preparedness and response, HIV/AIDS prevention, smoking cessation initiatives, school-based clinics, and programs and research to stem growing asthma and obesity epidemics in our urban environments.

A global presence built on vision, excellence, and impact, the School addresses today's and tomorrow's health challenges through a broad lens, leading on scientific discoveries and innovations to create model public health solutions that can be replicated and scaled, and are health-creating across the country and around the world, providing lifesaving and health-improving interventions to millions of people. To this end, faculty members pursue research, service, and educational projects in more than 100 countries. Whether promoting the health of whole populations or focused on how to improve the well-being of those most vulnerable, whether working in resource-limited communities to improve reproductive health

for women or developing models of care and prevention for HIV-infected people in northern Manhattan or Africa, the School is committed to improving the health of populations around the corner and in all corners of the world.

Dean Jonathan Mermin

Jonathan Mermin, MD, MPH, is the ninth Dean of Columbia Mailman, the DeLamar Professor of Public Health, and Senior Vice President of Columbia University Irving Medical Center. A distinguished epidemiologist, researcher, and organizational leader, Dean Mermin has spent decades advancing public health science, practice, and policy. He previously served as director of the National Center for HIV, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), where he oversaw an annual budget of \$1.5 billion and 1,800 staff, and led national efforts to prevent infectious diseases, reduce health disparities, and translate evidence into effective public health action. He is a retired two-star Rear Admiral and Assistant Surgeon General in the U.S. Public Health Service.

Dean Mermin is deeply committed to supporting innovative, meaningful research, implementing effective programs, and mentoring the next generation of public health leaders. He was director of CDC-Uganda from 1999 to 2006, and CDC-Kenya from 2006 to 2009. He collaborated with the Ugandan and Kenyan governments and non-governmental organizations to research and implement cost-effective interventions for people with HIV and their families that became the standard of care. He co-led the first U.S. government-funded program providing antiretroviral therapy to people outside the U.S., which was a guiding force for the PEPFAR initiative. While in Africa and the U.S., he led CDC's responses to outbreaks of mpox, Ebola, HIV, and other infectious diseases. Throughout his career, Dean Mermin has emphasized data-driven decision-making and collaboration with communities most affected by health issues. He has authored and co-authored over 250 peer-reviewed publications.

Dean Mermin earned his AB from Harvard University, his MD from the Stanford University School of Medicine, and his MPH from the Emory University Rollins School of Public Health. He completed his internal medicine residency at the University of California, San Francisco, and his preventive medicine residency at the CDC and the California Department of Public Health. He completed an Epidemic Intelligence Service Fellowship at CDC.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOMEDICAL SCIENCES

The Department of Sociomedical Sciences (SMS) is dedicated to analyzing and addressing the social determinants of health. SMS brings together social and behavioral science disciplines to educate the next generation of public health leaders and to conduct action-oriented research. The disciplines examine the relationship between trends in health outcomes and structural and social forces - including economics, discrimination, stigma, and law - to expose the fundamental social causes of public health outcomes. It translates theory and evidence to identify the approaches needed at population, clinical, and individual levels to provide and protect health.

SMS draws upon a diverse range of analytic methods and conceptual frameworks from anthropology, behavioral science, ethics, history, political science, psychology, and sociology. Using these tools, faculty, staff, and students explore a wide array of public health issues. SMS faculty have a track record of conceptually innovative work that has produced ground-breaking findings in areas such as mental health, global population aging, cancer prevention, health of women and girls, urban health, HIV, tobacco and drug use, adolescent health, occupational and environmental health, and immigrant health. SMS emphasizes the critical importance of factors such as socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality in influencing health vulnerabilities. The Department's greatest strength is its capacity to conduct interdisciplinary health research on public health challenges.

The mission of SMS is to foster an understanding of public health as embedded social, cultural, economic, and political contexts, and to develop the basis for effective 21st century health promotion. While changing individual behavior is critically important for improving health and wellness, individual choices are shaped and constrained by far-reaching contemporary and historical forces. Consequently, effective public health interventions embrace multiple levels and address the complex systems that influence population health. The Department embraces interdisciplinary and collaborative research across departments and schools to best meet its mission.

Research

The department's research and teaching are premised on the idea that to understand patterns of illness in society and to create effective interventions that improve population health, it is essential to analyze the contextual factors that structure people's choices, actions, and exposure to risks, and to assess the ethical and political dimensions of these patterns. Faculty examine the ways that social, economic, and political factors influence health outcomes, and design and evaluate interventions that change these factors to improve health and longevity. SMS is devoted to improving population health and reducing disparities.

The multidisciplinary application of social science theories and methods in SMS provides a unique and innovative approach to addressing public health challenges. Its varied analytic perspectives result in one of the strongest departments of social and behavioral sciences in a school of public health. The department's work advances the theory and the practice of public health in both domestic and global settings.

SMS has longstanding areas of expertise in women's health, substance use, HIV prevention and treatment, gender and sexuality, health communications, and environmental health. The department also studies global health, mental health, criminal justice, energy insecurity, climate change and reproductive policies through community-engaged research. SMS has a strong foundation in implementation science, place-based interventions, ethics and data science. New ideas and areas of focus are welcome in the department.

SMS faculty includes internationally recognized researchers and scholars who bring an exceptional breadth and depth of social and behavioral science expertise to bear on domestic and global public health issues. Supported by strong external funding, the department offers robust educational programs with graduates securing leadership roles across public health practice, academia, government, and nonprofit organizations, as well as competitive placement in doctoral and professional programs. Research findings from SMS have a high impact and broad reach.

SMS faculty have excellent track records of securing competitive external funding for their research from government and private sources. The department has a robust educational program, and several faculty members contribute to the first-semester Columbia Mailman core curriculum. SMS graduates of both the MPH and MS programs have excellent employment outcomes, going on to hold leadership positions in the full range of professional and academic settings in which public health work is carried out. Many have also gone on to pursue further study in competitive doctoral programs in public health, medicine, law, or the social sciences. Its PhD and DrPH graduates have gone on to tenure-track positions at leading universities and positions outside of academia, in think tanks, consulting firms, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations.

The Department accomplishes its work through its multidisciplinary body of 24 full-time faculty and approximately 12 affiliated and adjunct faculty. The faculty's contributions are shaped and informed by active engagement in community-based activities, which result in cutting-edge research, education, and service. As a dynamic and diverse global city, New York City represents an important context for faculty and student activities. Faculty members are currently engaged in research domestically and globally, including India, Mexico, South Africa, Mozambique, Tanzania, China, Canada, Australia, and France. Further, the core faculty's commitment to teaching and training is particularly strong, as evident in numerous NIH-funded doctoral and post-doctoral training programs, which are led or co-led by SMS faculty.

SMS faculty will continue as leaders in implementation science focused on cancer prevention, population mental health, HIV treatment and prevention, and substance abuse. These efforts seek to develop and sustain evidence-based interventions that promote health equity and focus on community-engaged activities to translate research into practice. New research projects in SMS highlight our expertise in designing and implementing structural, behavior change, and policy interventions. This includes two recent program launches: Global Mental Health (GMH) @ Mailman, an interdisciplinary and interdepartmental program focused on interventions that address social determinants of mental health and the future of GMH from a public health perspective; and Energy, Equity, Housing and Health, focused on foundational research on the concept of energy insecurity to the evaluation of various interventions and policies at the housing and community level.

SMS houses several research centers that provide opportunities for interdisciplinary and community - engaged collaboration at the neighborhood level, at Columbia University, and within the broader field of public health. Examples include:

- Lerner Center for Public Health Promotion
- Center for the History and Ethics of Public Health
- Miami Research Center
- Harlem Health Promotion Center
- Columbia Population Research Center
- Region 2 Public Health Training Center
- New York City STI/HIV Prevention Training Center

SMS is also home to the newly launched School-wide Center and rapidly growing research programs.

- Susan Lasker Brody Center for Population Mental Health
- Gender, Adolescent Transitions, and Environment (GATE)
- Global and Population Mental Health
- Energy, Equity, Housing, and Health

EDUCATION

The Department of Sociomedical Sciences offers three degrees: the Master of Public Health (MPH), the Master of Science (MS), and the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). The MPH and MS are conferred by the Mailman School of Public Health, while the PhD is conferred by the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. In the 2025-2026 academic year, there were 144 students enrolled in SMS (129 MPH, 3 MS, 1 DrPH, 11 PhD). These students take courses with our 24 primary faculty and 12 affiliated and adjunct faculty.

SMS also administers six SMS Certificates available for all Mailman MPH students: Health Communication; Health Promotion Research and Practice; History, Ethics and Law; Public Health Research Methods; Sexuality, Sexual and Reproductive Health; and Social Determinants of Health. Each of these certificate programs provides students with advanced and interdisciplinary training.

The SMS PhD program, which is primarily focused on partnerships with Columbia's social science departments in the Arts and Sciences, offers in-depth methodological training that is not the norm at other schools of public health. Depending on their concentration, students take approximately half of their coursework in anthropology, sociology, or history, which prepares them to undertake innovative interdisciplinary research that is distinctive among schools of public health. SMS also offers a concentration in social and behavioral sciences that is fully based in Columbia Mailman and offers collaborative opportunities through the School.

The Department is the home for innovative, specialized doctoral training programs. SMS holds the nation's first multidisciplinary doctoral training programs in gender, sexuality, and health and a School-wide doctoral program on the social determinants of HIV, as well as a pre- and post-doctoral fellowship in HIV, Substance Use, and the Criminal Justice System in partnership with Columbia University's School of Social Work.

The MPH and MS graduates pursue work in public health agencies and service-delivery systems; participate as members of research or health promotion teams; or use the degree to complement such professional careers as nursing, law, medicine, social work, urban planning, or international affairs. PhD graduates pursue careers in research, teaching, and public policy, and prior DrPH graduates work as leaders in applied settings across all sectors.

ROLE OF THE CHAIR

The next Chair of the Department of Sociomedical Sciences has a unique opportunity to lead one of the nation's foremost departments dedicated to understanding and addressing the social and structural determinants of health. Building on a distinguished history of interdisciplinary scholarship, innovative education, and community-engaged research, the Chair will guide SMS into its next era of growth and influence. The Chair will provide strategic, academic, and administrative leadership for a dynamic department whose faculty, students, and research programs are advancing public health knowledge and practice locally, nationally, and globally. Working at the intersection of disciplines, the Chair will be well-positioned to leverage the Department's intellectual breadth and methodological diversity to address emerging public health challenges and strengthen SMS's leadership in interdisciplinary public health science.

As the Department's academic leader, the Chair will be responsible for maintaining and extending SMS's preeminence in research, teaching, and service while fostering innovation across its scholarly and educational programs. The Chair will support and develop a distinguished faculty, promote a collaborative and inclusive departmental culture, and ensure that students continue to receive a rigorous and impactful educational experience. With responsibility for faculty recruitment, retention, mentorship, promotion, and professional development, the Chair will play a central role in cultivating the next generation of scholars and public health leaders. The successful candidate will also oversee departmental operations and resources, ensuring the long-term financial health and organizational effectiveness of the Department.

As public health challenges become increasingly complex and interconnected, the Chair will have the opportunity to deepen existing collaborations and forge new partnerships within Columbia Mailman and across Columbia University, CUIMC, and external organizations around the world. The Chair will support principal investigators and strengthen the Department's already robust research enterprise while helping to diversify funding sources through federal, foundation, philanthropic, and other mission-aligned partnerships. As a member of the Dean's leadership team and a leader within the broader School, medical center, and university communities, the Chair will work collaboratively with fellow department chairs, vice deans, center directors, and faculty colleagues to advance Columbia Mailman's strategic priorities and expand its interdisciplinary research portfolio.

To build upon the Department's longstanding strengths and position SMS for continued success, the Chair will address the following opportunities and challenges.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE NEXT CHAIR

Define the next chapter of sociomedical science.

As one of the nation's leading departments dedicated to understanding the social and structural determinants of health, SMS is exceptionally well-positioned to shape the future of public health scholarship, policy, and practice, and the influence and use of new technologies, including artificial intelligence, for understanding public health and developing interventions. The next Chair will have the opportunity to articulate a compelling vision for the Department's future, building upon its distinguished legacy while expanding its intellectual influence across Columbia Mailman, CUIMC, Columbia University, and the broader public health community. Through thoughtful strategic leadership, the Chair will help position SMS as a leading voice in addressing both longstanding and emerging public health challenges.

Position SMS at the forefront of interdisciplinary public health science.

The Department's greatest strength lies in its multidisciplinary approach, drawing on perspectives from anthropology, sociology, psychology, behavioral sciences, ethics, history, political science, and public health to address the social and structural determinants of health. The next Chair will have the opportunity to leverage Columbia's vast academic and research ecosystem to deepen existing collaborations, foster new interdisciplinary partnerships, and expand the Department's influence in emerging areas of public health. Building on longstanding strengths in areas such as HIV, gender and sexuality, women's health, substance use, and environmental health, the Chair will help position SMS at the forefront of scholarship addressing increasingly complex challenges, including mental health, implementation science, climate change, public health communications, energy insecurity, criminal justice, and data ethics.

Strengthen and diversify the Department's research enterprise.

SMS has a long history of impactful scholarship and externally funded research. As funding priorities continue to evolve, the next Chair will have the opportunity to support faculty success in securing federal funding in a changing environment while expanding partnerships with foundations, philanthropic organizations, and other mission-aligned funders. The Chair will help position the Department to pursue innovative research opportunities while sustaining its longstanding commitment to rigorous, policy-relevant scholarship.

Sustain excellence across research, education, and service.

With robust MPH, MS, and PhD programs, multiple doctoral training initiatives, and broad contributions to the School's educational mission, SMS plays a central role within Columbia Mailman. The next Chair must balance a wide range of responsibilities, ensuring continued excellence in research, teaching, student mentorship, faculty support, and departmental operations while advancing the Department's

strategic priorities, including increasing student enrollment, and contributing to the broader success of the School.

Recruit, develop, and support an exceptional faculty community.

The Department is home to a talented and highly accomplished faculty whose work spans a broad range of public health issues and methodological approaches. The next Chair will play a critical role in recruiting, mentoring, developing, and retaining outstanding faculty while fostering a culture of collaboration, inclusion, intellectual curiosity, and academic excellence. Particular attention will be needed to support faculty across career stages and ensure continued leadership in emerging areas of scholarship.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The successful candidate for the Stephen Smith Professor and Chair of Sociomedical Sciences will possess:

- A doctoral degree in public health or a related social science discipline or an MD with credentials commensurate with appointment as a tenured full professor at Columbia University;
- An internationally recognized record of scholarly achievement and intellectual leadership, including a distinguished body of research that has advanced understanding of the social, behavioral, structural, cultural, and political determinants of health;
- A strong record of securing and leading externally funded research programs and supporting the growth of a vibrant and impactful research enterprise;
- A demonstrated commitment to interdisciplinary public health science, with the ability to bridge disciplines, methodologies, and perspectives in pursuit of innovative solutions to complex public health challenges;
- The vision and strategic acumen to articulate and implement a compelling future direction for the Department while aligning departmental priorities with those of the Columbia Mailman School of Public Health, CUIMC, and Columbia University;
- Demonstrated success building, leading, and sustaining high-performing interdisciplinary teams, centers, programs, or academic units;
- A demonstrated commitment to mentorship, faculty development, and faculty success across all career stages, including recruitment, retention, promotion, leadership development, and succession planning;
- The ability to inspire, motivate, and lead through periods of change, growth, and evolving institutional and funding landscapes;
- A collaborative, transparent, and communicative leadership style characterized by integrity, sound judgment, and a commitment to shared governance and inclusive decision-making;
- Demonstrated skill in building consensus, navigating complex organizational environments, and addressing challenges with diplomacy, effectiveness, and respect;
- Strong administrative, financial, and organizational leadership abilities, including experience managing budgets, personnel, academic programs, and strategic initiatives;

- Exceptional relationship-building skills and the intellectual curiosity, political acumen, and institutional awareness to engage stakeholders across the School, medical center, University, community, and broader public health field;
- The ability to develop and strengthen partnerships across disciplines, departments, centers, universities, community organizations, governmental agencies, and other external collaborators;
- A demonstrated commitment to advancing equity, justice, and human rights through scholarship, education, leadership, and public engagement, and;
- A deep appreciation for the role of sociomedical sciences in addressing society's most pressing public health challenges and a commitment to translating research into meaningful impact on policy, practice, and population health.

COMPENSATION

The anticipated compensation for this role is \$325,000-\$375,000.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/columbia-university-mailman-school-public-health/department-chair-sociomedical>

Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

Stephanie Fidel, Partner
Jasmine Miller, Senior Associate
Maria Peña, Senior Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller

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