Meet the Dean: Iman Hakim

Name: Iman Hakim
College: Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health
Dean since: 2008
Fun fact: She is an expert when it comes to creating digital photo books.

Why did you choose to join the UA?

I completed my medical degree, pediatric residency and Ph.D. in Egypt. I joined the National Research Center, where it allowed me to split my time between the clinic and research. I have always believed in social justice and health equity, therefore, along with my colleague we implemented a comprehensive health care program in a couple of rural communities. I came to Arizona back in August 1992 and enrolled in the M.P.H. program. I was part of the first graduating class in 1994.

What do you enjoy most about serving as dean of the Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health?

Public health is the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting human health and wellness. I enjoy serving with our faculty, staff and students, who are all particularly passionate about creating healthy communities and ensuring health equity through cutting-edge educational programs, innovative public health research, advocacy and service. I enjoy advancing and fostering strong community engagement and partnerships. The college has a long history of community engagement, partnership and service in communities throughout the state, the region, the nation and internationally.
Faculty in the college are involved in a wide range of efforts related to fire safety and emergency preparedness. What is the significance of that work and what role do partnerships play?

Our faculty are experts in interdisciplinary research and community engagement. Cancer is a leading cause of death among firefighters. Our faculty are working closely with the Tucson Fire Department, and will evaluate exposure to carcinogens throughout the work shift, measure biomarkers of carcinogenic effect, and test the effectiveness of interventions to reduce carcinogen exposure.

The college’s Mountain West Preparedness and Emergency Response Learning Center [3] is part of a national network of 14 learning centers serving in a regional capacity for training of the U.S. public health workforce. The learning centers provide emergency preparedness and response workforce development by offering assistance to state, local and tribal public health authorities. The MWPERLC service area includes the states of Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and, through a partnership with Montana State University, the tribes of Montana. The mission is to develop and deliver core-competency and capabilities-based training for Tier I (entry level) and Tier II (mid-level) state, local and tribal public health professionals. The MWPERLC has a special focus on program planning and evaluation and tribal public health preparedness, working closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, state, local, tribal and other federal partners, and the network of Preparedness and Emergency Response Learning Centers.

What is your leadership philosophy?

I am mostly drawn to the team leadership approach by building on people’s strength, creativity, passion and shared governance. I am committed to connect with, motivate and inspire others to achieve outstanding results, while working to accomplish the mission and growing the college.

What does the future hold for the College of Public Health?

The Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health will continue in its mission for achieving health equity through excellence in education, research and service.

- More students are seeking careers in public health. The college consistently ranks among the top five of the 65 accredited schools of public health for American Indian and Hispanic students, and is home to a large cohort of returned Peace Corps volunteers.
- We are able to reach more students through our growing undergraduate and Master of Public Health online programs.
- The Phoenix campus is growing.
- We launched the M.P.H. concentration in one health [4] this fall. We have a group of faculty experts in infectious epidemiology, environmental health and global health who have been working closely with a group of faculty across the UA around the concept of "One Health" for the last two years.
- The college has an Academic Program Review scheduled in April of 2018. The self-study document will be submitted at the beginning of calendar 2018.

How do you spend your free time?

I enjoy gardening and I am an expert in creating digital photo books. I love spending time with
my two grandchildren, who are celebrating their second birthday this year.

You have been the principal investigator of several large-scale, behavior change intervention research projects and clinical trials focused on nutrition and cancer prevention. You've also done a lot of research on tea consumption and coronary heart disease. How did you first get interested in doing this kind of work?

This is a very interesting story. While completing my M.P.H., I was a co-investigator on a skin cancer grant. My role was to do the skin exams, take skin biopsies, process biological samples and run the fatty acid assays at the end of the study. I started attending the "Cancer Prevention and Control" weekly seminars and realized that the focus was always about extracting the active food compounds and testing them as cutaneous application for skin cancer or oral pills/capsules for other cancers. Therefore, I wondered if trials of whole diets rather than dietary constituents are more likely to yield results showing a clear-cut benefit. This was the start of a series of epidemiological and nutrition intervention clinical trials focused on tea and limonene as parts of the Mediterranean diet.

Can you explain what the Global Health Institute is and the role it plays?

I established the Global Health Institute [5] in 2009. The GHI's mission is to address global health disparities and offer solutions through education, research and health diplomacy, and by training a strong culturally competent workforce. GHI's main goal is to catalyze global health activity at the University of Arizona through domestic and international collaboration aimed at education, collaborative research, training and public health outreach. We are excited to participate in the University's micro-campus initiative.

What is one thing most people don't know about you?

I am a very good cook.

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