

## ► NCCR Programs Collaborate on Science Education

“I can do that!” should be the motto of HEADS UP (Health Education and Discovering Science while Unlocking Potential). That’s the reaction this K–12 science education project, funded through a NCCR Science Education Partnership Award (SEPA), often receives when students watch videos of people in science-related careers, part of a self-described “initiative to excite students about science.”

Through multimedia science curriculum modules, middle and high school students learn about such topics as genetics, nutrition and physical activity, and the nervous system while listening to graduate students, investigators, and other experts talk about their work. “We present cutting-edge content and role models for the kids,” explains HEADS UP principal investigator Nancy Murray at the University of Texas School of Public Health. One result: students in the Spring Branch Independent School District of Houston have shown a significant improvement on Stanford 10 Achievement test scores in science as well as increased interest in the subject.

To develop the curriculum, HEADS UP staff collaborates with researchers and clinicians at the university’s Health Science Center in Houston, a member of NCCR’s Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) consortium. Interactions like these, between SEPA and CTSA programs, are taking place across the country. They are helping educators and researchers reach out to communities to bring NIH health messages to a wider audience while

building awareness of the value of clinical research.

According to Murray, “the CTSA and SEPA programs come together in community engagement, which depends on developing long-term relationships.” HEADS UP also trains teachers, sponsors family nights, and, with the CTSA, works with a 100-member community advisory group and offers health screenings and informative displays at community events.

As another example, in Portland, Ore., investigators from Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU), another CTSA recipient, developed a series of interactive exhibits about different health topics at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry. The effort is the most recent installment in a long-standing collaboration between these two NCCR-funded organizations.

The exhibits, sponsored in large part by the CTSA grant, were located at the exit of the extremely popular Body Worlds 3 traveling exhibition. One group of NIH-funded researchers from the university’s Center for the Study of Weight Regulation recruited more than 1,300 museum visitors willing to participate in a clinical study. Data collected anonymously through five separate stations included dietary assessments and measurements of height, girth, heart rate, and blood glucose and



■ Jonathan Purnell, a researcher at the Center for the Study of Weight Regulation at Oregon Health & Science University, puts a wristband on a visitor to the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry. The wristband allows researchers to anonymously collect body weight and other data from museum visitors who agree to participate in a nutrition study.

cholesterol concentrations. In addition, some study participants agreed to receive periodic e-mail suggestions for better health based on their individual assessments and an invitation for a three-month follow-up assessment. “We’re trying to be a model in the way we’ve leveraged our SEPA programs with the research-funded centers,” says William Cameron, principal investigator for the SEPA-funded Teacher Institute for the Experience of Science at OHSU. ■