Dear Friends of Hopkins Epidemiology:

I hope this greeting finds you well in this New Year of 2013! As we anticipate the possibilities of this coming year, I want to pause and celebrate our very successful 2012. The prodigious efforts of our department’s faculty and students continue to have a transformative impact on public health throughout the world and right here in Baltimore.

Our faculty, consistently recognized as educational leaders throughout the school, has led an impressive growth in the department’s educational enterprise. The department sponsored more than 100 courses last year with an increasingly flexible set of online and onsite offerings. Last summer’s 30th Annual Graduate Summer Institute of Epidemiology and Biostatistics had an enrollment approaching 450 students, reflecting the value and international acclaim of the program that Moyses Szklo developed three decades ago with a handful of committed faculty. We’re fortunate to have Professor Szklo’s continued leadership of this premier educational program and his ongoing pursuit of new courses, reflected in the 2013 Institute course catalog that will be arriving shortly.

Several of our faculty have been honored for the excellence of their pedagogy: Liz Selvin and Derek Cummings were awarded the AMTRA (Advising, Mentoring, Teaching Recognition Award) in May, Homayoon Farzadegan received the School’s 2012 Golden Apple, Darcy Phelan was asked to teach our introductory Epidemiology course to Homewood undergraduates not once, but twice, and was awarded the Homewood Golden Apple. This past fall, Dani Fallin, Priya Duggal and the genetic epidemiology faculty were awarded a substantial training grant from the Burroughs Wellcome Fund in collaboration with David Valle of the Institute of Genetic Medicine in the School of Medicine. This grant will allow cross-training of genetic epidemiologists and human geneticists while simultaneously increasing collaboration, and furthering the missions of both fields. Finally, Stephen Gange and I led a team of faculty in a successful application for the Provost’s inaugural Gateway Sciences Award. Our application, which proposed developing a common ‘brand’ and integrating greater active learning strategies and other enhancements for introductory Epidemiology courses across the campus, was the only non-undergraduate award made.

One of the proudest honors for a faculty member is being named to an endowed professorship. We were delighted to congratulate Josef Coresh on his installation as the inaugural George W. Comstock Professor. This endowment was generously provided for by gifts from Dr. Comstock’s students, friends, colleagues, and family. As the Director of the Comstock Center in Hagerstown, Joe continues the tradition of community-based prevention research in Washington County.

The department also celebrated the creation of a second endowed professorship, made possible by students, faculty, colleagues and friends in the memory of B. Frank and Kathleen Polk. Frank was a leader in HIV research and infectious diseases who despite his premature
death, left an indelible mark on the Department, the School, the University and the entire HIV/AIDS field. This professorship, given to a new faculty member in the area of infectious diseases, was awarded to David Dowdy. David was also named as the 2012 Young Investigator Award from the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease and has already begun to establish his mark on public health - indeed, the government of India enacted a nationwide ban on commercial serologic tests for tuberculosis based on David’s cost-effectiveness analysis published in PLoS Medicine.

These efforts represent the best tradition of our faculty’s contributions to major research and practice contributions to the field of public health. Among these is also the work of new infectious disease faculty member, David Smith, who was a major collaborator to MalariaMap, which updates the spatial epidemiology and geographical distribution of Plasmodium vivax in addition to P. falciparum, essential for the control and elimination of malaria. Len Rubenstein, of the department’s Center for Public Health and Human Rights, shepherded a resolution through the World Health Assembly in May 2012 requiring WHO to provide global leadership in the collection and dissemination of data of attacks on health workers, health facilities, patients and ambulances. It is the first time any international agency has been required to engage in this task, which can provide the foundation for accountability and future prevention. The importance of this resolution has been underscored by the tragic killings of polio vaccina.

Chris Beyrer, director of the Center for Public Health and Human Rights, has been recognized for his contribution to the field with an honorary doctorate in health sciences from Chiang Mai University. This is a wonderful tribute, and follows a lineage that includes Kenrad Nelson and myself, honoring our epidemiological work on HIV in Thailand over the more than two decades. Chris was also elected President of the International AIDS Society, and is hard at work on planning the 2014 international AIDS meeting in Australia. Finally, Chris led a large contingent of the department’s faculty (including Susan Sherman, Shruti Mehta, Maria Wawer, Bryan Lau, Wendy Davis, myself, and others) who successfully competed for the new Johns Hopkins Center for AIDS Research, a five-year award that will allow us to continue our successful collaborations in HIV research. Within HIV research, Ron Gray and Maria Wawer continue to expand their 25 year collaboration in Rakai, Uganda, having been awarded a major new combination HIV prevention project from the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) to cover the entire district. On the domestic front, both the ALIVE study (led by Shruti Mehta and Greg Kirk) and the MACS data center (led by Lisa Jacobson) marked their 25th anniversaries; the WIHS data center entered its 16th year and received a 5-year renewal under the leadership of Elizabeth Golub and Stephen Gange. These distinguished research collaborations continue as fertile training grounds for many doctoral students and fellows across the University.

Other important faculty milestones this past year included the election of Larry Appel, Director of the Welch Center, to the Institute of Medicine. In October we launched the Center for Drug Safety and Effectiveness, representing our increased interest and commitment to pharmacoepidemiology, directed by Caleb Alexander, who joined our faculty as Associate Professor in February (from the University of Chicago’s School of Medicine), and Jodi Segal,
from the Division of General Internal Medicine in the School of Medicine. This new center is a joint venture between Epidemiology and Medicine, and is patterned after the highly successful Welch Center.

The Department serves as the academic home for the American Journal of Epidemiology, under the editorial leadership of Moyses Szklo as well as Epidemiology Reviews, edited by Michel Ibrahim, which is ranked first among 157 journals in the field of public health. Look out for this year’s issue that will focus on the epidemiology of women’s health.

With a large (nearly 100) and talented full-time faculty, change seems to be the norm. A highlight of my life as Chair is to shepherd promotions and the advancement of our faculty. We have had several wonderful examples of this growth in the last year. I am very pleased that Stephen Gange will follow Jim Yager as the next Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs beginning in July; Stephen is “shadowing” Jim during this academic year to learn the job, before serving as the Chief Academic Officer for the School. Amber D’Souza was promoted to Associate Professor in recognition for her work on oral HPV epidemiology and cohort studies of HIV. Eliseo Guallar was promoted to Professor in the area of occupational and environmental epidemiology. Eliseo is a world expert on the role of heavy metals influencing cardiovascular morbidity and mortality, and he directs several major cohort studies in Spain (among automobile assembly workers) and Korea (the Samsung Cohort Study of several hundred thousand workers and their dependents). Tom Glass, the leader of our social epidemiology group, was promoted to Professor; his work on the conceptualization of the social “causes” of disease has been widely cited as a major paradigm shift in the field of obesity and chronic disease. Linda Kao was promoted to Professor in the genetic epidemiology program. Linda is a central figure in collaborative genetic research on cardiovascular disease and chronic kidney disease, conducted with the Welch Center. Finally, Bill Moss was promoted to Professor in infectious diseases epidemiology. Bill has made major contributions to our understanding of pediatric issues of HIV disease and treatment, and he plays a central role on studies of malaria in sub-Saharan Africa. Bill is Deputy Director of the International Center of Excellence in Malaria Research in conjunction with the Malaria Research Institute in the Department of Molecular Microbiology and Immunology. With Stephen Gange being seconded to the Dean’s Office, I was delighted that Bill agreed to serve as Deputy Chair for the Department, along with Terri Beaty, who has served in that position since 2007.

Many new faculty members joined the Department in 2012! As mentioned above, Caleb Alexander was appointed Associate Professor; Caleb is also appointed in General Internal Medicine and is following a panel of patients in the Outpatient Center. Carlos Castillo was appointed Professor, and is leading our refreshed professional epidemiology program in collaboration with Keri Althoff and Stefan Baral. Carlos oversaw epidemiology surveillance in the Americas for 25 years at PAHO and pioneered the continuing Epidemiology for Managers in the Americas program. Andrea DeLuca transferred from International Health and continues to work on TB prevention and control. Stephan Ehrhardt was appointed as Associate Professor this past year, coming from Hamburg with his wife and newborn son. Stephan is working on a series of studies investigating maternal stressors and child development, HIV, and conducting clinical trials. Katherine Footer was appointed as Research Associate in the
Center for Public Health and Human Rights. Katherine is a lawyer who emigrated from the UK, joining a vibrant and growing group who are using epidemiologic evidence to document human rights violations. Christine Ladd-Acosta was appointed Assistant Scientist; she works closely with Dani Fallin in studying the epidemiology of autism spectrum disorders. Tianjing Li was appointed Assistant Professor in 2012. She has joined Kay Dickersin’s group, doing systematic reviews and meta-analysis, and focuses on vision issues and new methodological challenges. Jennifer Schrack was appointed at the rank of Instructor in Epidemiology. She is teaching two courses to our public health undergraduate majors at Homewood, and is continuing her aging research with the Baltimore Longitudinal Study on Aging. In our national search for faculty in the epidemiology of aging, Jen was selected for a position of Assistant Professor, and will join us in this role in September 2013. Efe Sezgin was appointed Research Associate, and joined Curt Meinert’s group coordinating clinical trials. David Smith was appointed Professor, coming from the University of Florida. David focuses on evolutionary biology, addressing issues of malaria control around the world. He is a member of the Malaria Research Institute, and joins the growing group of statistical modelers in infectious diseases epidemiology, which presently includes Derek Cummings and Justin Lessler. Finally, Yiyi Zhang joined as an Assistant Scientist, working with Eliseo Guallar on the Samsung Cohort Study, focusing on occupational epidemiology and cardiovascular diseases.

Sadly, several of our stalwart faculty departed in 2012. Cheryl Anderson left the Welch Center for a new position at UC-San Diego. It seems that Baltimore cannot compete with the weather in San Diego. Paulo Chaves will develop a gerontology research program at the relatively new School of Medicine at Florida International University in Miami. Jean Ford left us after a decade to become Chair of the Department of Medicine at the Brooklyn Hospital Center, a 464-bed acute care teaching hospital affiliated with Weill Cornell. Elizabeth Sugar transferred her primary appointment to the Department of Biostatistics, but retains a joint appointment in Epidemiology. Finally, Milo Puhan returned to Zurich, Switzerland where he will direct the public health program overseeing the health of the Zurich population. We are thankful that while faculty tackle new challenges at other institutions, affiliations and research ties remain active.

Students remain the lifeblood of an academic department. In August 2012, we welcomed a new cohort of 20 doctoral candidates and 30 masters students. They join 74 continuing doctoral candidates and 29 masters degree students. At Convocation in late May, we graduated 29 doctorates in Epidemiology and 30 masters degrees.

Among student honors, Chiadi Ndumele, Assistant Professor of Medicine in Cardiology and current PhD candidate in Epidemiology, was named as the Robert Meyerhoff Professor in the Department of Medicine. Henrik Salje was awarded the Lilienfeld Award from the Society for Epidemiologic Research, and Oliver Laeyendecker received a Performance Award from NIAID/NIH. Edward Hammond and Bonnie Swenor were named Student Assembly’s Teaching Assistant Awardees. Miranda Jones was the overall Winner in the Delta Omega 2012 Poster Competition. Fiona Havers and David Hanna were given Young Investigator Awards at the 2012 Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections. Inductees into
Delta Omega (Alpha Chapter) during 2012 included graduates Catharine Prussing, Andrea Schneider, Sheree Schwartz and Nikolas Wada, alumnus Olugbenga Obasanjo, and faculty members Gail Daumit, Gypsyamber D’Souza and Liz Selvin. Congratulations to all!

Please join me in celebrating these achievements of our faculty and students. Of course, none of this would have been possible without the dedication and hard work of our staff – to them we offer our sincere appreciation. As we embark on another year of collaboration and growth, we encourage you to send us YOUR news and let us know when you are back in town – we would love to welcome you back to Baltimore to attend a seminar, teach a class, or just visit old friends and colleagues.

Sincerely yours,

David D. Celentano, ScD, MHS
Charles Armstrong Chair
Professor of Epidemiology, International Health, and Medicine